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First Committee

3rd Meeting
Monday, 13 October 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: In accordance with the adopted programme of work, today the Committee will begin its general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items. Permit me first, however, to make a statement as presiding officer of this body.

I had occasion during an earlier meeting of the Committee to extend a warm welcome to all representatives participating in the work of the First Committee during this session of the General Assembly. I also had occasion to thank them most sincerely for the great honour they have bestowed upon me and my country in electing me Chairman of this important Committee. I can only reiterate these sentiments at this juncture and express the hope that I can count on the goodwill and cooperation of all delegations and members of the Bureau, when they have been elected, in carrying out the multifaceted responsibilities of the Chairman of this Committee.

We have a duty to perform within a given time-frame. I urge all representatives to honour that time limit. We should endeavour to be punctual, to keep statements as close as possible to the 15-minute time limit, to avoid polemics and to reach early agreement on all draft resolutions. I will be meeting with the Chairmen of the regional groups and other important actors in this regard.

The fifty-second session of the General Assembly has begun its work in a favourable international climate. The main features of international security changed radically during the late 1980s and early 1990s, when our understanding of international security underwent unrelenting alterations and adjustments. Unprecedented as these changes were in pace and volume and in systemic and conceptual shifts, they have slowed down somewhat over the last two years, and the whole system of international security is showing welcome signs of stabilization.

There are a number of valuable conclusions to be drawn from this fact, concerning in particular the theoretical underpinnings of disarmament and its practical implementation. Let me briefly touch upon some of them.

First and foremost, the international climate is quite propitious for the implementation of concluded disarmament agreements as well as for new disarmament undertakings aimed at the finalization of the new security concepts and structures which emerged in the first half of the 1990s and which will be dominant for the remainder of the millennium and beyond.

The second conclusion is that the comprehensive nature of security in the modern world requires flexibility and a multifaceted approach to the question of disarmament. Such an approach could be general or specific; global or regional; unilateral, bilateral or multilateral; separate or interconnected; step-by-step or all-encompassing, depending on the circumstances.

Thirdly, the achievements of the international community in the field of disarmament in general, and nuclear disarmament in particular, have been impressive during the past few years. A lot, however, remains to be done. It is clear that nuclear weapons will remain for the

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foreseeable future an important feature of the military posture of nuclear-weapon States. It could therefore be reasonably expected that a debate on the role of nuclear weapons will continue unabated, especially on the step-by-step approach, security assurances and cut-off, to mention but a few of these areas.

This session follows several noteworthy developments in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation which were met with overwhelming approval. The signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is the welcome and commendable outcome of a more than 40-year effort by the international community aimed at preventing vertical proliferation and qualitative improvements of nuclear weapons. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) paved the way for other initiatives and in particular gave a strong impulse to the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in different parts of the world. The successful conclusion of the Pelindaba Treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa last year was a long-overdue step towards the total denuclearization of the African Continent.

The new agreements between the United States, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan within the framework of the START II Treaty and the agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation on the START III and Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaties introduced a healthy dose of realism into the adjusted time-table for the destruction of nuclear warheads and their means of delivery. We hope that this new schedule will be strictly adhered to.

While welcoming these developments, the international community has simultaneously focused on a number of other global and regional measures aimed at averting or reducing the risk of nuclear war and its devastating consequences. Among these the issue of nuclear-weapon-free zones has attained considerable prominence. The treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok, as well as proposals for nuclear-weapon-free zones in the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and a single-State nuclear-weapon-free-zone concept are material witnesses to the growing worldwide support for such zones. They are increasingly viewed as an important contribution to an overall international climate in which the attainment of general and complete disarmament becomes more feasible.

There is little argument over the fact that, based on transparency and the free exchange of information, nuclear-weapon-free zones foster greater understanding between neighbouring States, encourage cooperation among them and thus strengthen international peace and security and regional stability. It is worth noting that the first working group ever to be created within the Disarmament Commission on this issue has launched successful discussions based exactly on the above premises.

It is regrettable that the outcome of the consideration of other key issues within another international negotiating forum, the Conference on Disarmament, has not been equally successful. Divergence of views has impeded progress in such vital areas as time-bound nuclear disarmament, outer space, a convention on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons, the cut-off of the production of fissile materials, security assurances and so on. Although it had been hoped that the Conference on Disarmament would have been able to find solutions to these problems, regrettably that body could not agree on negotiating mandates regarding these issues.

It is against the background of this temporary setback that the international community has more reason to celebrate the progress achieved with regard to other weapons of mass destruction, namely the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction — the Chemical Weapons Convention — on 29 April this year and the ongoing effort to enhance the compliance provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction — the Biological Weapons Convention. There is little argument that the prohibition of biological and chemical weapons and the destruction of stockpiles of those weapons have positively influenced ongoing discussions on a range of nuclear issues, and will continue to do so.

I hope that I am speaking on behalf of all delegations when I single out the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention as a highlight of this year's disarmament calendar. To date, more than 100 countries have become States parties to the Convention and 165 have signed it. I wholeheartedly endorse the remarks of the Secretary-General, who has noted that we are privileged witnesses to a remarkable era of peacemaking, of which the Chemical Weapons Convention represents a landmark agreement. And it is the imperative of our time to strive towards universal adherence to that Convention.

The 1972 Biological Weapons Convention has provided the international community with a unique means

to eradicate one of the three existing types of weapons of mass destruction. Over the years, the Convention has proved to be a powerful international legal instrument, averting a potentially dangerous arms race in this new area. However, the Convention does not have specific verification provisions. While this deficiency was not a determining factor during the cold war, a verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention has become a necessity in the light of the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, with their elaborate verification mechanisms. I hope that the ad hoc group in Geneva will soon move to a negotiating format and conclude the process by finalizing the verification protocol and setting up relevant mechanisms for this important Convention.

One of the persistent concerns expressed by an overwhelming majority of delegations on conventional weapons is the problem of mines. This comes as no surprise considering the track record of these weapons, and the terror and havoc they cause to civilian populations. A number of developments have taken place aimed at building the political support of the international community for reaching a total ban on anti-personnel mines. An international strategy conference held in October 1996 launched the Ottawa process, which concluded with a treaty in Oslo on 18 September, with more than 100 countries agreeing to submit for formal signing such a treaty outlawing anti-personnel mines. I welcome this development. It is a step in the right direction from the military, political and moral points of view. I sincerely hope that the Treaty will eventually become universal.

The end of the cold war has given rise to intra-State, ethnic and religious conflicts which are fought with readily available and easy-to-use small arms. These weapons are not the primary reason for these wars, but they contribute in no small measure to the escalation of a conflict from zero belligerence to the hottest forms of armed violence. The United Nations has as a result shown keen interest in this issue. I would like to comment on two developments in this regard: the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and the beginning of deliberations in the Disarmament Commission on guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on questions of small arms. Let me, on behalf of the First Committee, commend the experts on an excellent and thorough study. As to the discussions within the Disarmament Commission, it should be noted that after a three-year consideration of illicit transfers of arms, it was more than logical for member States to take up the issue of small arms, since these weapons are most likely to be illicitly traded and to wind up in the hands of irregular troops operating with total disregard for international or humanitarian law. It is my belief that the final report of the Disarmament Commission on this issue will build on and add to the findings of the experts.

Five years ago, the United Nations embarked on a new endeavour in the area of transparency and confidence-building measures: the first international arms-transfer register was established, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. At that time, the critics suggested that the undertaking was not daring enough or did not go far enough in its innovative approaches. Its supporters, on the other hand, rightly pointed out that the proposed mechanism was only the first step and would be followed ultimately by other, bolder measures. Time has proved the supporters correct. The Register has grown into a potent confidence-building tool. Three expert groups since 1992 have introduced necessary changes and adjustments to make the Register consonant with the changing world. In this connection, I wish to draw attention to the latest report of the group of governmental experts. We have taken note of the recommendation contained in the report to make public the information on military holdings and procurement through national production, which previously was supplied on a voluntary basis as a part of background information. Despite the participation of 90 countries in the Register, it should be noted that universality is the ultimate goal. Also, the reporting countries are not evenly distributed among the regions, with some regions having a high concentration of reporting States and others having none.

One of the encouraging developments this year was the successful session of the Disarmament Commission. After two years of shortened substantive sessions, the Commission has returned to a three-week format. This showed positive results. Despite the fact that two of three agenda items were in the initial stages of discussions, the working groups on those two items have laid a solid foundation for their future work, and the interim documents compiled on subject issues reveal a serious intention on the part of delegations to elaborate comprehensive and practical recommendations. We believe that the Commission will continue to play an important role in the field of arms limitation and disarmament.

With regard to the subjects under consideration at the Disarmament Commission, I would like to single out the issue of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which has been on the agenda of this body for the last two years. In spite of the fact that

there was a general understanding concerning the need to convene such a session, the Commission was unable to reach a consensus on the objectives and agenda for the session. I will not elaborate on different views of countries, since they are well known to all those present. What I would like to point out is the expectation that the current session will once again devote efforts to the question of convening the special session. I think that intensive consultations should lead to a draft resolution which will be conducive to the convening of the session and will result in an agreement to begin the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament.

Before concluding, let me briefly touch upon the item on the rationalization of the work of the First Committee and in this context comment on our organization of work, the agenda of the First Committee and the proposed programme of work. As representatives are aware, this issue has been dealt with by the First Committee since 1984. The consideration of the item has taken place as part and parcel of the exercise aimed at enhancing the overall effectiveness of the United Nations and its main bodies, as well as the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. Like my predecessors, I intend to concentrate our discussions on two areas for the reform covering substantive and procedural aspects of the issue. I expect that all delegations will demonstrate their innovative thinking and new approaches, which may drastically depart from the old train of thought, as it has blocked progress for so long. We could move forward in many different ways, but we should definitely start by formulating an international disarmament agenda in such a way that it is focused on attainable goals. This agenda should be practical, action-oriented and concentrated on key, updated issues.

We have a full load and an important task ahead of us. I hope that the general debate will be intellectually rewarding, morally fulfilling and practically applicable. In conducting this kind of work, I will count on the support of all delegations. For my part, I can pledge my best effort to make our common endeavour a successful one.

Agenda items 62 to 82

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. de Icaza (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I would like to extend to you, Sir, the congratulations of my delegation on your election to guide the work of the First Committee. Your experience and personal qualities augur well for good results. You can count on my delegation's cooperation and support in this important task.

Since the end of the bipolar confrontation, significant progress in arms control and reduction has undoubtedly taken place. Taking into account only what has taken place this year, we can highlight the establishment of the Provisional Technical Secretariat of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization as the starting point of the complex verification system provided for in the Treaty, a crucial component of the credibility of this legal instrument. We hope that the ratification process will not be hindered by the continuation of nuclear tests, which give rise to doubts as to the commitment of States to an end to the qualitative proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Also in 1997, the Paris Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons entered into force and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons started its operations. During the last few months we have witnessed an avalanche of ratifications to the Convention, which as of 22 September already had 100 States Parties. We again call on the Russian Federation — a country which has declared that it possesses chemical weapons — to ratify this treaty as soon as possible.

In the context of the negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation, the Helsinki presidential summit led to the signing of the first agreements. The Protocol to the START II Treaty increases the possibility that the agreed reductions will take place and that START III negotiations will begin. The adjustments incorporated in the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty will serve to maintain the effectiveness of an essential instrument for the control of the arms race.

Nevertheless, these achievements cannot hide the exasperating lack of consensus on the part of the international community on security and disarmament priorities and on the objectives to be pursued not only now, but also in the first decades of the next century. This lack of consensus permeates the main multilateral deliberative forums and the sole negotiating body. We have therefore not been able to reach agreement on the objectives and agenda for a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Persistent differences on nuclear disarmament make it impossible to agree on an agenda that would take into consideration the legitimate security concerns of all.

The elimination of nuclear weapons remains our priority, as agreed in the 1978 Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, until we achieve consensus on disarmament and security principles and objectives for the post-cold-war era. However, this is not merely a priority. The International Court of Justice has already stated that there is an obligation on all States to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.

To comply with this imperative obligation, Mexico and 25 other countries submitted a draft mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to the Conference on Disarmament last June, as a follow-up to the programme of work submitted by the Group of 21, in which it called, as it has done persistently, for the immediate establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. This initiative proposes that the Conference on Disarmament negotiate a multilateral instrument committing all States to the objective of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons; an agreement on the steps required in a phased programme with deadlines leading to their total elimination; and a convention prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices. We think that such a mandate would take into account the concerns of all States and certainly would not create any linkage or preference — which my delegation has always rejected — with regard to opening negotiations on one type of instrument or another.

It should be noted that support for the commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament is not limited to the Group of 21. However, time seems to have stood still in the Conference on this issue. Attitudes which might have been understandable in times of confrontation still exist and impede any flexibility. Unable to devote itself to its priorities, the Conference wavers between stagnation and irrelevance.

The 1995 decision on the strengthening of the review mechanism of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has been put to the test for the first time this year. According to that decision, the Preparatory Committee shall consider principles, objectives and means to promote the full application of the Treaty and its universality, and make recommendations thereon to the Review Conference. We welcome this exercise, which undoubtedly is less procedural than all previous preparatory processes of NPT Review Conferences.

In this spirit Mexico participated in the first session of the Preparatory Committee, held in April this year. We regret, however, that at this early stage in our deliberations narrow-minded attitudes have already emerged, which are contrary to the spirit of dialogue that in 1995 allowed for the indefinite extension of the Treaty and the adoption of the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

We will work to ensure that the second session of the Preparatory Committee is a genuine follow-up to the discussions that took place here in New York and that the proposals that are on the table will not be disregarded as if each session of the Preparatory Committee were unrelated to the previous one.

In Mexico, on 14 February 1997 we solemnly celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and noted that the denuclearization regime for Latin America and the Caribbean is practically completed, thus strengthening peace and regional stability. My delegation will submit, as is its custom, a draft resolution on the consolidation of the regime established by our Treaty.

We welcome the decision of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to set up a new regime of denuclearization in Central Asia modelled on existing treaties. Mexico participated as a special guest in the Tashkent conference, and we naturally wish to state our full readiness to use our experience to help in the establishment of a new zone from which nuclear weapons are banished.

We are convinced that experience acquired in regions where a denuclearization regime exists stimulates the creation of new zones and mechanisms of cooperation among the various treaty bodies. Much can be learned from the experience of these bodies, some of which carry out duties that were not provided for in the early treaties of this kind. A useful exchange of views among such bodies may result, filling gaps or addressing shortcomings in the various legal instruments. This is, in our view, the value of the exercise undertaken last year at the initiative of Brazil, which culminated in resolution 51/45 B, on the nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, they will continue to be a threat to the very survival of humankind. Today, not only is there no justification for nuclear weapons, but concerns relating to their mistaken, accidental or unauthorized use have increased. No other issue deserves

higher priority than that of their elimination. The international community is aware of this, and an increasing number of voices, even within nuclear-weapon States, are demanding that we return to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

No one expects this task to be easily or swiftly accomplished. We need first an unequivocal commitment by all States to the elimination of nuclear weapons, and in particular from the nuclear-weapon States. A programme with clearly defined steps for the adoption of the necessary unilateral, bilateral and multilateral measures is also required.

There is no lack of material or ideas on the subject. The proposal for a programme of action submitted last year by 28 delegations belonging to the Group of 21 in the Conference on Disarmament, the Canberra Commission report and the model convention for the elimination of nuclear weapons presented by the Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy provide some good examples. Indeed, nobody expects that measures that must be the result of understandings reached bilaterally or within a small group of States should be negotiated multilaterally. But it is equally unacceptable for nuclear disarmament to be left exclusively to nuclear-weapon States. Therefore, refusing to deal with nuclear disarmament in any of the existing multilateral forums will not make the issue disappear.

It is the responsibility of all to respond to the universal demands for a nuclear-weapon-free world. Those of us who are committed to the goal of nuclear disarmament will in the end find a way to overcome the paralysis imposed on us. Mexico will initiate consultations to that end and will explore the possibility of reconvening, in accordance with present circumstances, the Conference of Non-Nuclear-Weapon States, which took place in 1968.

At this session of the General Assembly the delegation of Mexico will continue to support draft resolutions on nuclear disarmament, on the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons, and on the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice.

One of the paradoxes of this era of détente is the excessive availability, stockpiling and transfer of conventional weapons. Mexico is convinced that States that produce and supply conventional weapons, together with States that receive them, share a common responsibility to ensure that the volume and level of sophistication of such weapons do not exceed legitimate defence needs, promote regional instability or arm races, exacerbate, intensify or prolong conflicts, or become the object of illicit trafficking.

Disarmament and conventional arms control have a greater chance of success at the regional level. Mexico would therefore welcome a reduction in the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons and has co-sponsored General Assembly resolutions requesting the Conference on Disarmament to formulate principles that could serve as a framework for the negotiation of regional agreements on conventional-arms control.

Within our region, Mexico has taken initiatives in this area and we earnestly hope that we will achieve rapid progress. We hope to conclude this very week negotiations on a draft inter-American convention against the production and illicit trafficking of firearms, munitions, explosives and other related materials, as an important means of combating the illicit transfer and use of conventional weapons, which cause such serious problems because of their links to drug trafficking, terrorism and the increasing danger posed by common and organized crime. We will report on our achievements to the General Assembly in compliance with resolution 51/45 F of last year.

The Government of Mexico is deeply satisfied with the adoption in Oslo of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. A set of norms has been established to remedy the tragedy caused by the continuous placement of new anti-personnel mines, at a rate of two million each year, which cancels out the heroic and patient, but also modest, demining efforts. By not using, stockpiling, producing and transferring anti-personnel mines, we save the lives of thousands of innocent people exposed to the indiscriminate proliferation of those instruments of terror and untold suffering.

We are also committed to destroying existing anti-personnel mines, both those planted and those stockpiled, and progress has been made in promoting international cooperation for those who have fewer human and financial resources with which to deal with the problem.

We achieved the text of this treaty in less than a year through a negotiating process open to all States. The large number of participants from all regions, and the political will shown, gave the process an unequivocal seal of legitimacy.

The relative speed with which the negotiation process was completed was due, first, to the urgent need to respond to the humanitarian tragedy of anti-personnel mines; secondly, to the effective mobilization of civil society, in particular the International Campaign to Ban Landmines,

which was rightly awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace this year; and thirdly, to the fact that we did not begin from scratch. In fact, it took us more than 20 years to reach a total ban on anti-personnel mines, and in the process we passed through significant and important stages in which humanitarian and military needs were duly addressed.

The exercise was begun by Mexico and other States in the Diplomatic Conference on the Reaffirmation and Development of International Humanitarian Law Applicable in Armed Conflicts, in 1974, when — as Mr. Davinic, who joined me in this process, will recall — we proposed a ban on the use of scattered mines remotely delivered or launched from aircraft. On the initiative of that group of countries, to which Mexico belonged, the United Nations Conference on the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects was held in 1979 and 1980, leading to the adoption of a Protocol on the restriction of the use of mines, booby traps and other devices.

In 1995, in the Vienna Review Conference of the 1980 Convention, Mexico was the first country to favour a total ban on anti-personnel mines. It was not possible then to reach that goal, but a new amended Protocol restricting the use of mines was adopted.

Those who are committed to the Ottawa process will submit to the General Assembly a draft resolution inviting all States to be parties to the Convention.

Mexico is convinced that it is necessary to strengthen the section of the Secretariat which services different disarmament bodies so as to deal with a growing and increasingly diverse need for substantive services.

Member States, particularly those that are not military Powers, receive indispensable material from the Secretariat that allows us to participate in the discussion of all disarmament issues. We regret the fact that, for the first time in many years, we began the deliberations of the First Committee without having last year's *Disarmament Yearbook*. This does not augur well for the strengthening of the Secretariat in the field of disarmament.

The Secretariat contributes to the implementation of policies determined by Member States. The United Nations institutional arrangements in this field reflect an agreed agenda and priorities. The existence of weapons of mass destruction, beginning with nuclear weapons, is the greatest threat facing humankind. When there is still so much to be done to stop and reverse the arms race in the field of weapons of mass destruction, the problem cannot be reduced to horizontal non-proliferation.

The fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament will certainly affect mandates, membership and methods of work of the sole negotiating body, as well as of the deliberative forums, but it will also have an effect on the Secretariat's role. Meanwhile, the 1978 Final Document, which is still valid, should guide us all in our endeavours.

Mr. Millim (Luxembourg) *(interpretation from French)*: Mr. Chairman, allow me first to congratulate you on behalf of the European Union on your election. We have every confidence that under your chairmanship our discussions will proceed smoothly. It goes without saying that your efforts and those of the Bureau have the full support of the Member States of the Union.

This statement is endorsed by the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and the associated country, Cyprus.

In the context of its common foreign and security policy, the Union attaches particular importance to matters relating to the strengthening of international peace and security. This concern is reflected in the Union's considerable commitment on all the matters dealt with by the First Committee.

We have the good fortune to be experiencing a period of considerable progress in the international security environment. The divisions that have endangered our common security for decades have now been removed. The Union has fully committed itself to constructing a new architecture for European security, a process which is being conducted in an atmosphere marked by a new spirit of cooperation.

The European Union is convinced that the enlargement processes of both the European Union and the Atlantic Alliance will help to consolidate peace and stability without creating new divisions in Europe. The signing on 27 May 1997 in Paris of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Russian Federation also marks the beginning of a new era in Euro-Atlantic security relations.

The Union is committed to the modernization of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which is the cornerstone of Europe's security. It welcomes the decision of 23 July on certain fundamental elements regarding amendment of the Treaty. Member countries of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) which are not parties to the Treaty will be informed of the progress of negotiations in the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, which continues to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of conventional arms control in Europe. Among other things, the Forum can play an important role in implementing the commitments on arms limitation and regional stabilization provided for in the peace agreement concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The European Union is making an active contribution to the implementation of the peace agreements in the former Yugoslavia, with the aim of helping the countries concerned to advance towards democracy and the rule of law. The European Union believes that by pursuing these objectives it is contributing to the stabilization of that region. The impending completion, on 28 October, of the arms reduction programme in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has been implemented with the assistance of certain member States of the European Union, gives cause for satisfaction and provides an example of the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures. In this context, the Union hopes that the utmost restraint will be exercised as regards the acquisition of armaments and other military equipment.

With regard to security in the Euro-Mediterranean area, I would point out that, in the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995, the European Union and 12 countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean undertook to promote and strengthen the peace, stability and security of the area. These objectives were reaffirmed in the conclusions adopted by the Foreign Ministers at the second Euro-Mediterranean ministerial conference, held in Malta in April 1997. In particular, concrete progress was made in the formulation of confidence-building and security-building measures. Moreover, in accordance with the Barcelona and Malta mandates, discussions between senior officials to finalize a peace and stability Charter are now taking place.

The Union reiterates its request that signatory States that have not yet ratified the "Open Skies" Treaty should do so as soon as possible.

In the context of the common European security policy, the Union attaches particular importance to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation. It believes that the progress made in these areas can make a substantial contribution to peace and the strengthening of international security. It has welcomed the significant progress made recently and reaffirms its intention of continuing actively to promote this process.

Among the notable events of the past year, I would like to mention the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction; the beginning of the reinforced process of reviewing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the conclusion of work at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on the strengthening of nuclear safeguards; and the international community's active search for an agreement on banning anti-personnel mines.

Unfortunately, despite these measures, the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of conventional weapons has still not been eliminated. The European Union calls for a continuing commitment on the part of the international community in the campaign against such risks, which threaten us all. For the Union, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime. The European Union welcomes Brazil's declared intention of acceding to the NPT. The Union continues to appeal for worldwide accession to the Treaty and reiterates its call for those States that have not yet done so to accede to the NPT and conclude comprehensive safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency. The European Union welcomed the important decisions taken at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference on the indefinite extension of the Treaty, the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and the strengthening of the process for reviewing the Treaty. The European Union also welcomed the generally very constructive atmosphere of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the next NPT Review Conference, in the year 2000, and it is pleased at the results of that session. In the light of these results, the European Union is determined to continue the work on both substance and procedure at the second session of the Preparatory Committee and calls on all States to join it in this effort.

The Union also welcomes the adoption on 15 May this year by the competent authorities of the International Atomic Energy Agency of the Model Protocol that relates to Programme "93+2", part II, and is intended to enable undeclared nuclear activities to be detected. For its part,

the European Union is determined to conclude the additional protocols with the IAEA as soon as possible. To this end the relevant preparatory work has already begun within the Union. The European Union earnestly hopes that other States will also embark on negotiations with the IAEA to conclude additional protocols as soon as possible.

The adoption and opening for signature last year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) made a tangible contribution to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, promoting the process of nuclear disarmament and strengthening international peace and security. The CTBT provides a strong impetus to implementation of the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. They identified the conclusion of the negotiations for a treaty as the first of the measures under the action programme that was drawn up to give full effect to the provisions of article VI of the NPT. The initial work of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBT Organization has already enabled progress to be made in preparing for implementation of the Treaty. The continuation of this work will depend on whether the future Organization is set up within the time limits and in the form specified by the Treaty, and this, for the European Union, makes it particularly important that all States accede to the CTBT. The European Union welcomes the fact that 147 countries have signed the Treaty and that seven of them have ratified it. It calls on all States that have not yet signed the Treaty to do so as soon as possible.

Following the conclusion of the CTBT negotiations, the international community should now concentrate its efforts on the second measure under the action programme for implementing article VI of the NPT, contained in the decision on principles and objectives. This involves the immediate opening and rapid conclusion of negotiations for a universal, non-discriminatory convention banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear devices. The Union reiterates its hope, expressed many times before, that, in accordance with the declaration made by the Special Coordinator of the Conference on Disarmament and its mandate, the Conference on Disarmament will set up as soon as possible an ad hoc committee to conduct these negotiations. The Union finds it regrettable and disappointing that, this year again, the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to open negotiations on a cut-off treaty, despite the fact that in 1995, the Conference on Disarmament agreed to set up an ad hoc committee.

The Union also continues to attach great importance to the third and last measure of the action programme contained in the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, namely, the determined pursuit by nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce and eventually eliminate all nuclear weapons and to the desire of all States to work for general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control. The Union welcomes the progress achieved in this area. The entry into force of the START Treaty was a major milestone in this process, as were the major reductions in their nuclear arsenals made unilaterally by the two parties to that agreement and by other nuclear-weapon States, including the United Kingdom and France. The Union hopes that another important step forward will soon be made with the ratification of the START II Treaty by Russia, and that the way will thus be open for negotiations to begin on START III.

With regard to the risks of nuclear proliferation, certain regions have aroused particular concern in the last few years. In response to these specific concerns, the European Union has attached particular importance to the non-proliferation objectives of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO). After deciding to provide initial assistance in the form of a contribution of ECU 5 million to KEDO in March 1996, the Union has sought ways of supporting it in a more substantial and lasting manner. Accordingly, negotiations with the founding members of KEDO began in October 1996. They led to the conclusion of an agreement that provides for an annual contribution by the Union of up to ECU 15 million for a period of five years and opens the way for European Union participation in the KEDO Executive Board.

In this way the Union will be able to play an active part in this important initiative aimed at strengthening stability and security in that region. In this context, the Union reiterates that it attaches particular importance to respect by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for its international commitments under its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In Iraq, the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), charged with the disarming of that country, has since 1991 been performing its difficult and important task of identifying and eliminating Iraq's capacity in terms of weapons of mass destruction. The European Union applauds the efforts of the Special Commission and reaffirms its support. We should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work done by the outgoing

Chairman of UNSCOM and to assure his successor of our full support. We are certain he will carry on this important task with the same diligence as his predecessor. The European Union calls for Iraq to cooperate fully with UNSCOM so that the relevant Security Council resolutions can be implemented in their entirety. It considers any obstruction to the work of the inspectors to be contrary to those resolutions.

In the Union's view, the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, based on arrangements freely concluded between States in a given region, strengthens global and regional peace and stability. The Union welcomes the establishment of new zones by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Pelindaba and Rarotonga, as well as the current efforts to make the zone established by the Treaty of Bangkok fully effective. This year the Union has again indicated its interest in the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia. Similarly, the Union continues to support efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and of all weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. The Union notes that all the countries in the region but one are at present parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). It would refer to the resolution of the 1995 NPT Conference requiring all Middle East States that had not yet done so, without exception, to accede to the NPT as soon as possible and to make progress towards the creation of such a zone.

In the field of non-nuclear weapons, the Union warmly welcomed the entry into force on 29 April 1997 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). This Convention, the first multilaterally negotiated disarmament agreement to prohibit a whole category of weapons of mass destruction in a verifiable manner, is a landmark in the disarmament process. All the member States of the Union were among the first States parties to the Convention and attended the First Conference of States Parties at The Hague last May. That Conference took measures to agree on the institutional and organizational structures that are needed if all the tasks assigned by the Conference are to be carried out successfully. In this context, the Union calls on all States parties to the Convention to fulfil all their obligations under it, in particular as regards the submission of full declarations. The Union attaches great importance to the Convention's being universal and to its effective implementation. It therefore requests all States that have not yet done so, especially those with large chemical industries and those in areas of tension, to sign and/or ratify this Convention.

In particular, the Union considers the early ratification of the CWC by the Russian Federation, which holds very large stocks of chemical weapons, to be of fundamental importance if the Convention is to be effective. The European Union is well aware of the consequences that ratification of the CWC will have for the Russian Federation. As regards the financial impact, the Union is willing to provide assistance in areas relating to the destruction of stocks of declared chemical weapons as soon as Russia has ratified the Convention. We wish to note that such assistance is in addition to the bilateral initiatives that several member States of the Union have already taken to support the Russian Federation in this area.

The European Union would like to reaffirm the importance it attaches to strengthening the effective implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), in particular through the adoption by States parties to the Convention of an effective verification system. It welcomed the decision taken at the Fourth Review Conference of the Parties to the Convention last December to step up the work of the ad hoc group charged with drawing up a verification protocol to the Convention. In this context, the Union urges the ad hoc group to step up its work significantly over the next year; the work programme for next year, which at present provides for 11 weeks of meetings, should be strengthened. The European Union also welcomes the progress made since then by the ad hoc group, and especially the transition to negotiations based on an evolving text. The Union firmly intends to continue to play an active and constructive role in the ad hoc group's proceedings. It calls on all the other participants to do the same so that the negotiations can result in the adoption of a legally binding protocol as soon as possible. The European Union is determined to redouble its efforts to attain the objective of concluding these negotiations in 1998. Biological weapons pose a very particular threat because of the ease with which they can be manufactured. It is therefore all the more important for an effective verification mechanism to be put in place.

The network of international conventions seeking to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is backed up by the indispensable instrument of export controls. Several incidents in the recent past have underlined the importance of the various systems of export control in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Clearly, there is still a risk of certain goods and technologies being used illicitly. Any exporting State must therefore take measures to ensure that its exports of sensitive materials, equipment and technologies are subject to an appropriate system of surveillance and

control. Export controls have no purpose other than to prevent the irresponsible spread of materials, equipment and technologies that might be used in breach of the aims of non-proliferation. Far from being a bureaucratic obstacle to international trade and cooperation, controls of this kind are a precondition for such cooperation. These controls make it easier for the countries concerned to pursue technological development on a joint basis.

In this context, the exporting States need to explain the value of export controls and to demonstrate clearly that, far from obstructing trade for peaceful purposes, they actually make it possible for such trade to take place. An open dialogue should ensure that the relevant principles and practices are understood, and thereby facilitate cooperation.

The Union would emphasize the scale of the contribution made by the non-proliferation and export-control systems to the international community's concerted action against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. The joint approach by the Australia Group plays a central role in the fight against the proliferation of chemical and biological weapons. Another vital contribution is that made by the directives of the Missile Technology Control Regime on preventing the proliferation of the means of delivery of weapons of mass destruction. The Nuclear Suppliers Group plays a key role in formulating directives on the export of nuclear or dual-use materials, equipment and technologies in the context of the development of the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The measures agreed under the Wassenaar Arrangement provide yet another very useful element. Through their dialogue with non-member countries, all these arrangements have demonstrated the desire to pursue important initiatives in the matter of transparency. The European Union applauds these efforts, which it fully supports. I would note in passing that the Union gave practical expression to its commitment to the promotion of transparency in nuclear-export controls last week at the seminar held by the Nuclear Suppliers Group at Vienna. The Union calls on all States to adopt responsible policies concerning transfers of sensitive materials, including the introduction of effective systems of export control.

Persuaded as it is of the importance of transparency with regard to armaments as a factor for establishing a climate of trust between States, the Union considers that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is a very important instrument, the value of which should be enhanced. This view is reflected in the support given by all Member States to the draft resolution on transparency in the field of armaments, which will be submitted to the First Committee. It welcomes the adoption of the report of the Group of Governmental Experts and the positive evaluation of the Register during its first five years of existence. The Union calls on all States to submit a return — even a "nil" return — to the Register on a regular basis so that its value as a regional and subregional confidence-building measure can be further enhanced. At present, in addition to information on the import and export of arms, States are asked to provide information on military holdings and procurement through national production. Such information is in addition to the information on exports and imports of arms covered by the categories of the Register. In this connection, the Union regrets that the Group of Experts was unable at its last meeting to agree on a specific format applicable to military holdings and procurement through national production.

The European Union is also convinced of the importance of the information system set up at the United Nations concerning objective information on military issues, including the transparency of military expenditure, and urges all States to take part in it. For their part, the States members of the Union have drawn up a joint response to the relevant resolution of the General Assembly in order to give a clear profile to their joint commitment to this exercise.

Responsibility with regard to transfers of conventional weapons is a key factor in ensuring international security. At its recent meeting at Amsterdam the European Council emphasized the fundamental importance that the Union attaches to consultation at international level to ensure effective control of arms exports. The adoption in 1996 by the United Nations Disarmament Commission of guidelines for international arms transfers is evidence of the widespread interest in this fundamental issue, which appeared once again on the Commission's agenda this year. In this context, the consolidation of peace in the phase immediately following an armed conflict requires broader cooperation between the international community and the countries directly concerned in the implementation of practical disarmament measures.

The accumulation and the excessive and destabilizing transfers of small arms and light weapons are at the root of increasing international concern. They represent the sole or primary tools of violence in our time, employed as they are for the most part in internal conflicts. The Union welcomes the recent report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and looks for a vigorous follow-up to its recommendations. Some of those recommendations deal with illicit trafficking in small arms. In June 1997, the

Union adopted a programme for preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional arms. The programme, which involves a series of measures to promote cooperation between member States and the aid provided by the European Union to third countries in this field, is aimed at the illicit trafficking in all types of conventional weapons, and in portable weapons in particular.

In the field of so-called conventional weapons there has been in recent years an extraordinary momentum concerning the urgent matter of the tragic consequences of the spread and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. In October of last year the Union adopted a joint action on anti-personnel landmines, in which it expressed its determination to achieve the objective of totally eliminating anti-personnel landmines and to work actively for the conclusion, as soon as possible, of an effective international agreement to ban such weapons worldwide. Accordingly, the 15 member States of the Union supported United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S. The European Union's joint action also involves a commitment by Union member States to observe a joint moratorium on the export of all anti-personnel landmines, whatever their destination, and a substantial financial contribution by the Union to the international effort to clear mines and provide aid to the victims of mines. Since the joint action was adopted, the Union has vigorously continued its efforts to achieve its objective, namely, the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines. Accordingly, the Union has undertaken to explore all possible ways of helping to bring about a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. It welcomes the work that has been done following the International Strategy Conference at Ottawa, notably at the seminars in Vienna and Bonn and at the Brussels Conference, as it does the adoption at Oslo of a Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines on 18 September 1997.

The European Union believes that it would be desirable for all States to endorse the objective of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines, which is also the objective of the future Ottawa convention. It is determined to promote its objectives actively in all the appropriate international forums, including the United Nations, the Conference on Disarmament, regional organizations and the review conferences of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects. To this end, the Union will continue its efforts at the Conference on Disarmament, including those towards the early establishment of a special committee on anti-personnel landmines. In the view of the European Union, the work that will be done following the Ottawa Conference in the Conference on Disarmament and all the other forums should make an effective contribution to the total banning of anti-personnel landmines throughout the world.

In June 1996, the Union welcomed the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to admit new members, some of which are member States of the Union. It also welcomes the fact that, in its resolution 51/47 A, the General Assembly called on the Conference on Disarmament to consider the admission of other applicants before the start of the General Assembly's fifty-second session. During the second stage of last year's session of the Conference on Disarmament, a special coordinator on enlargement was appointed and his report submitted to the Conference on 28 August 1997. The Union hopes that the Conference will soon be able to reach a consensus for resolving this problem and would draw attention here to the fact that five member States of the Union and four associated countries have applied for admission.

Last year, the General Assembly adopted a resolution stating that a fourth special session on disarmament could be convened in 1999, subject to a consensus being reached on its objectives and agenda. It was also stated that a preparatory committee for the session could be convened this year, subject in this case to the conclusions of the spring session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. At that session, the European Union reminded the Commission of some basic principles to which it is committed. It attaches importance, in particular, to the special session's agenda being comprehensive and balanced, with items concerning conventional weapons and weapons of mass destruction alike.

Last year, the European Union made a number of contributions to debates on specific issues. To ensure that these debates have maximum effect, it would ask all States to play an active and constructive part in them this year.

The European Union welcomes the Secretary-General's proposals on reform. It hopes that the United Nations will continue fully to play its role of sustaining and backing up the efforts of the Member States and that the role of Geneva as a centre for negotiation and analysis will be confirmed.

We are required this year to resume our discussions on rationalizing the work of the First Committee and reforming its agenda. The European Union intends to make

a substantial contribution to that debate so as to ensure that the efforts made in this forum are pursued productively.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your election to the chairmanship of this Committee. We are convinced that, given your personal experience and skills, as well as your representation of a region that has clearly demonstrated its commitment to disarmament, you will guide our work in an exemplary fashion.

We are living in a historic moment. Global confrontations have come to an end and ethical values have been reasserted; democracy is practised almost everywhere throughout the world; new economic opportunities have opened up; and integration is the dominant trend. This climate provides unprecedented opportunities in the areas of disarmament and security that must be exploited if we are to achieve effective agreements at the regional and global levels.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime. I believe that the United Nations must record as a major achievement the almost universal recognition that this instrument has achieved. We would also express our gratitude to those countries and regions that were pioneers in this area. Argentina welcomes the progress made in the preparations for the review conference to be held in the year 2000 and will continue to contribute to the meetings of the Preparatory Committee.

Among the significant achievements made this year, we must highlight the reaffirmation of the international commitment against weapons of mass destruction and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention with an effective verification mechanism, the first agreement of its kind. I believe that this Assembly should invite all Governments to accede to or ratify that Convention as soon as possible.

On the other hand, because they are easy to manufacture, biological weapons represent a particular threat to peace and security. Argentina believes that efforts should be stepped up to give the Biological Weapons Convention an effective verification mechanism. Thus, the decision of the Fourth Review Conference for that Convention is an important step in the right direction.

We must also point out the positive trend towards accession to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as the steps taken by the Preparatory Committee to implement this agreement. In this regard, I am pleased to report that the Government of Argentina has initiated steps for parliamentary ratification. Another important challenge is the undertaking of negotiations to adopt a convention banning the manufacture of fissile material. We regret the fact that, despite the decision taken in 1995, the work of the ad hoc committee has yet to begin.

Despite the positive balance in collective efforts in the field of disarmament and security, there still persists a disturbing risk of nuclear proliferation in the Korean peninsula. Argentina is party to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO); it has contributed to maintaining the administrative structure of that body and has made scientific cooperation available.

At a time when new kinds of conflicts are appearing in which non-State bodies are filling new voids, the international arms trade is particularly disturbing. We appreciate the purpose and the contribution of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We have expressed our satisfaction at the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and the assessment of the Register's functioning. We need to consider other steps to increase transparency in the transfer of arms. This is an area in which all countries, including the smallest, can make an extremely important contribution. For these reasons, we will support the draft resolution to be presented to the Committee.

All States must also keep in mind the agreement to ban anti-personnel mines reached in Oslo. Allow me to highlight the initial support this issue received from the Latin American and Caribbean Group. The Rio Group countries are committed to working towards converting the region into the world's first to be free of anti-personnel mines. For its part, in 1995 Argentina declared a five-year moratorium on the export, sale or transfer of anti-personnel mines.

Latin America and the Caribbean is a region free from the risk of arms races, as a result of the foreign policies of democratic Governments which, with determination and consistency, have been establishing a solid basis for confidence and mutual cooperation. The United States, which has decided to make the sale of weapons to the region more flexible, will find a field where political maturity, dialogue and integration are the best security against the reappearance of negative rhetoric, which was abandoned some time ago. Argentina is satisfied with the early efforts to remove the tension of the past, efforts which have been central to our foreign policy in recent

years. Today, dialogue continues in a constructive climate, and our armed forces conduct joint military exercises with their counterparts in Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. These developments are a faithful expression of the confidence achieved in the region.

This year Latin America and the Caribbean are commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This celebration marks the success of our efforts to establish the first nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world.

Argentina firmly believes in the need to consolidate the objectives of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, and we urge all States, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to continue to make progress along the trail blazed by Tlatelolco, Pelindaba, Rarotonga and Bangkok. Argentina will co-sponsor and endorse the draft resolution to be submitted on nuclear-weapon-free zones in the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas.

The meetings in Buenos Aires and Santiago de Chile of Organization of American States (OAS) experts on measures to promote confidence and security mechanisms, were a landmark, in that they gave proof of the will to strengthen the regional organization in this sensitive area. We hope to continue to make progress along these lines in the upcoming meeting to be held in San Salvador in 1998.

At the same time, I would stress that we are actively considering conventional disarmament proposals put forward by Mexico, such as a draft convention to ban the illicit manufacture of and traffic in firearms, munitions, explosives and related material.

I said at the outset that the international climate was favourable to accelerating commitments to promote disarmament and security. This opportunity must not be missed. States are pursuing political and social economic objectives, and fortunately appear to be gaining ground. Nevertheless, with the post-cold-war international system only just beginning to take shape it is not yet possible to see whether the future will continue to be free of conflict.

Finally, we support the series of measures proposed by the Secretary-General in the field of disarmament. In this regard, we must be cautious in two areas. First, administrative reorganization must not mean changes in the priorities or the responsibilities of the United Nations. Secondly, we must be able to include all countries in our efforts for peace and security. These issues must not be dealt with in the interests of a few. Therefore, both in administrative reorganization and in the substance, we must recognize the importance which the smallest countries have gained today, and we must give them an opportunity to participate fully.

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. I would like also to state that we are confident that with your expertise and knowledge you will lead the deliberations of this Committee in such a manner that we can achieve the results we all seek. This will enhance the international community's efforts in pursuit of disarmament. Rest assured of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in your endeavours to achieve this goal. I would like also to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to your predecessor, Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou, for his wise chairmanship of the Committee during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

The First Committee convenes this year amid some international and regional developments related to the achievement of international disarmament. These developments include, most notably, the success of the Oslo negotiations on an international ban on landmines, as well as the endorsement by the General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, the efforts to bring fully into force the Treaty of Bangkok, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones by virtue of the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga and Pelindaba, and the unanimous Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, which stated that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

This is in addition to the strengthening of the NPT safeguards by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Moreover, there have been other positive developments, such as the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the strengthening of the prohibition against biological weapons, and the adoption of amended Protocol II and of Protocol IV of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects.

The Sudan believes there are many tasks remaining for the international community in the field of nuclear disarmament, especially as regards the upcoming nuclear-disarmament agenda. In this regard, the Sudanese delegation stresses the necessity of serious negotiations on comprehensive nuclear disarmament, in conformity with the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly, the first special session devoted to disarmament, in 1978.

We are all agreed that with the end of the cold war there is no further justification for nuclear arsenals or for systems of international security based on competing military alliances or on nuclear deterrence. Yet those who follow the developments of the international scene, which have been marked by instability, will undoubtedly note with regret the nuclear-weapon States' attempts to justify continued reliance on the nuclear-deterrence theory. These States continue to maintain many nuclear weapons under the pretext of nuclear security.

The Sudanese delegation would like, in this connection, to reiterate its support for the proposal of the non-aligned countries that are members of the Conference on Disarmament. This proposal called on the Conference to establish on a priority basis an ad hoc committee to start negotiations on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time-frame. This programme would include a nuclear-weapons convention.

A universal and legally binding multilateral agreement should be concluded committing all States to eliminate all nuclear weapons. In this regard, the Sudanese delegation endorses the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We also very much look forward to the forthcoming second session of the Preparatory Commission for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons within the framework of the efforts to consolidate the Treaty's review process in order to guarantee the full implementation of the objectives set forth in the Treaty's preamble, of the other obligations under the Treaty, and of the commitments undertaken at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference. This is particularly important since the NPT represents the main instrument for stopping vertical and horizontal nuclear proliferation.

The international community should strive to achieve an equitable balance between the obligations and the responsibilities of the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States in order to completely eliminate these weapons. In this context, we would like to emphasize the need for universal adherence to the NPT and for the signing of legally binding conventions to secure the non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons, as well as to ban fissile materials and to end restrictions on the transfer of nuclear technology, material and equipment for peaceful purposes, which the developing countries need.

The Sudan supports and contributes to the international and regional efforts aimed at banning anti-personnel landmines. In this regard, we participated in the first conference on anti-personnel landmines in Africa, organized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and hosted by the Government of South Africa from 19 to 21 May 1997. The Sudan has also joined the African consensus on the African plan of action to clear landmines, which was adopted by the conference. Concomitantly, the Sudan participated in the international conference on anti-personnel landmines in Brussels from 24 to 27 June 1997. In addition, the Sudan joined the declaration of Brussels, which called for an international, comprehensive treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines under the umbrella of the United Nations. In line with the declaration of Brussels, the Sudan participated in the negotiations of the Oslo conference for the elaboration of a final treaty on the banning of anti-personnel landmines. In this context, the Sudan will strive to sign the treaty in Ottawa in December this year.

Being one of the countries that is affected by the danger of anti-personnel landmines, the Sudan has been very keen on participating in all international efforts to ban anti-personnel landmines. Preliminary estimates indicate more than 2 million of these deadly devices in Sudan. Such estimates may even be surpassed. They cover large areas in the south and the east of the country. They have been planted by the insurgency movement. These mines have led to the deterioration of the environment and have impeded the delivery of relief assistance and sustainable development. They have also thwarted the voluntary repatriation of 2 million refugees and displaced persons to their homes and shelters, where they could have returned to their normal lives.

With a view to enlightening public opinion in our country and soliciting national and international help in dealing with our landmine problem, the Government of the Sudan has organized several seminars and symposia to establish a national plan to clear landmines. The Sudan is looking forward to the assistance of the international community to support these efforts in order to improve

Sudan's mine-clearance capacity, and also to help care for and rehabilitate the victims. One of the articles of the Khartoum agreement, signed between the Government and the Southern factions on 21 April 1997, called for the consolidation of national efforts to clear land mines and to achieve a comprehensive ban and to extend assistance to victims. The Sudan is looking forward to the cooperation of the international community in the form of technical and material assistance and the transfer of advanced technology in order to enable it to deal with the problem of anti-personnel landmines. This would guarantee development, the return of stability and security, the preservation of the environment and the voluntary repatriation of refugees and displaced persons.

As one of the African countries adversely affected by war owing to the flow of arms to insurgency and subversive movements, the Sudan attaches special importance to the proliferation of conventional weapons. While it supports the principle of limiting trafficking in conventional arms and their use in violating human rights, repressing public opinion, destabilizing peace and security, escalating regional conflicts or supporting terrorism, the Sudan strongly affirms its right to use conventional weapons to defend its borders and its unity. This right is guaranteed us by international law and international covenants and norms. In this connection, we call upon other States to comply with what they have called for and particularly to stop providing insurgency and subversive movements with conventional weapons.

The Secretary-General made specific mention in his report to the General Assembly this year of the intense competition to export these weapons to conflict areas, thereby exacerbating the intensity and duration of those conflicts. The peaceful resolution by States of regional disputes is essential for the creation of conditions that would enable States to divert their resources from armaments to economic growth and development. Moreover, regional disarmament initiatives should take into consideration the special characteristics of each region and enhance the security of every State of the region concerned.

Like the other members of the international community, the Sudan believes that transparency in armaments is a means of enhancing international peace and security. The delegation of the Sudan in this connection reaffirms its support for the response forwarded by the States members of the League of Arab States to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the issue of transparency in armaments, given the fact that the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, in its current form, lacks transparency. Its scope should be expanded to include information on weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, in addition to the inclusion of advanced light technology with military applications.

The Register takes into account the situation in the Middle East, where Israel continues its occupation of Arab land, while it possesses the most lethal categories of sophisticated weapons and continues to be the only State in the region that is not yet party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Israel also persists in defying repeated appeals launched by the international community to accede to the Treaty and to place its unsafeguarded nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate the full cooperation of the delegation of the Sudan and its readiness to participate in the discussion of all the items on agenda of the First Committee with a view to reaching acceptable solutions in connection with all of them.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): The Malaysian delegation extends to you, Sir, our sincere congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We are confident of your ability to steer the work of this Committee to a fruitful outcome, to which end my delegation pledges its full cooperation with you and with members of the Bureau.

Allow me to make some general remarks at this stage of our deliberations. My delegation hopes that the deliberations of the Committee at its current session will contribute towards advancing further the disarmament process by drawing from the lessons of the past. This certainly could be realized if Member States are prepared to take a more constructive approach than in the past. Frankly, if we want to make real progress, we must be prepared to discard old and outmoded security concepts, paradigms and mindsets, notably the cold-war doctrine of nuclear deterrence, which continues to underpin the defence strategies of the nuclear-weapon States.

Such a doctrine, whatever its questionable merits during the cold war, is now neither credible nor consistent with the concept of a clearly non-winnable nuclear war. It will only spur the ceaseless quest for superiority of these weapons and hence will stand in the way of real disarmament. Only when the nuclear- weapon States are prepared to move out of their cold-war mentality and take serious measures towards the reduction and final elimination of their nuclear arsenals will there be real

prospects of a world without nuclear weapons and of getting the so-called threshold nuclear States to abandon their own nuclear ambitions.

From the perspective of the non-nuclear-weapon States, therefore, nuclear disarmament must remain a high priority on the international agenda. We acknowledge the importance of the ongoing bilateral and unilateral arrangements aimed at reducing the current nuclear-weapon stockpiles undertaken by the United States and the Russian Federation through the START process. However, we are mindful that even with the implementation of START II, which has yet to be ratified by Russia, we would still be far from the goal of a world completely free of nuclear weapons. Given that existing global stocks of nuclear arsenals number over 30,000, with the equivalent explosive force of 200,000 Hiroshima-sized bombs, it is imperative that the international community press on, with unremitting vigour, with the global campaign for a nuclear-weapon-free world. In the meantime, we urge the Russian Federation to ratify START II and that efforts be made by the parties concerned to commence negotiations on START III without undue delay.

We recall the almost euphoric adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the General Assembly on 10 September 1996. It was indeed an important event. Despite its obvious flaws and deficiencies, it was welcomed by the international community, which was anxious for some tangible progress towards nuclear disarmament. The Treaty clearly lacks an explicit commitment to the definitive end of the nuclear-arms race. Despite its name, the Treaty is far from comprehensive, as it allows the nuclear-weapon States to use advanced technology to modernize and upgrade their nuclear-weapon systems through laboratory test explosions.

This fear has now been confirmed. Less than a year after the adoption of the CTBT, amid an increasing number of its signatories, one nuclear-weapon State has recently announced plans to conduct a series of "subcritical" underground nuclear tests as part of the so-called stockpile stewardship and management programme to maintain and expand its nuclear-weapon capabilities well into the twenty-first century. Such tests are taking place despite the concerns expressed by the international community. No doubt this programme will be emulated by the other nuclear Powers, equally anxious to upgrade their own nuclear arsenals, thereby undermining efforts to encourage other States to sign the CTBT and those who have done so to ratify it. Continuing such tests is a sure way of delaying rather than expediting the entry into force of the Treaty.

While the international community is encouraged by the fact that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is reaching universality, the threshold States still remain outside of it, with few prospects of their joining in the foreseeable future. Nor have serious efforts been made to fully realize its main objectives, in particular, the provisions of article VI of that Treaty. Clearly much more needs to be done, and we call on all NPT States parties, in particular the nuclear- weapon States, to live up to their Treaty obligations while refraining from pursuing security policies which could undermine the letter and spirit of the Treaty.

The first meeting, in April this year, of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference to be held in the year 2000 provided the opportunity to consider further steps that could be taken to fulfil NPT obligations, particularly in respect of article VI of the Treaty. Despite some of the positive developments that have taken place in the nuclear disarmament area in recent years, little real progress has been made in the efforts towards the agreed goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

It is essential that future sessions of the Preparatory Committee make an accurate and objective assessment of compliance with NPT obligations. Only through such an objective analysis will we be able to evaluate the role of the NPT in the overall context of the nuclear disarmament process and to take the necessary measures to overcome its deficiencies. To that end, my delegation calls for a cooperative and constructive attitude on the part of all States parties to the NPT, notably the nuclear-weapon States, in future sessions of the Preparatory Committee so as to maximize the usefulness of the process.

Equally disappointing is the failure of the Conference on Disarmament even to agree on the programme of work for its 1997 session, let alone make any progress in the negotiations. Clearly, the continuing impasse in the Conference on Disarmament is a reflection of the differing positions between nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States on both approaches to and substantive aspects of the work of the Conference; this has certainly raised questions about the future role and effectiveness of that body. The continued paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament will not only undermine the usefulness and relevance of that single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament but will also increase the risks of it being sidelined, as recent events have proved. Clearly, the Conference on Disarmament will have to reexamine and improve its

working methods and decision-making process if it wants to be taken seriously by the international community.

Almost two years ago, the International Court of Justice, in a historic Advisory Opinion on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, unanimously concluded that States parties to the NPT have the obligation not only to begin but also to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. This was a positive and important contribution by the Court towards realizing the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. At its last session the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the First Committee, adopted resolution 51/45 M by a significant majority which, *inter alia*, underscored the Court's ruling on the obligation to pursue these negotiations in good faith, and called for the commencement of negotiations in 1997 leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear-weapons convention. In the light of the continuing impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, the sponsors of that resolution will renew their call during this session of the General Assembly.

We are gratified to see the increasing trend towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the globe. Moves to establish such zones are important regional initiatives towards the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world. To date, more than half of the world is covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones, thanks to the Antarctic Treaty as well as the Treaties of Rarotonga, Tlatelolco, Bangkok and Pelindaba. My delegation strongly supports this building-block approach to nuclear disarmament, and urges that similar efforts be made in other regions of the world so as to provide the necessary impetus towards realizing the goals of nuclear disarmament.

With its entry into force on 27 March 1997, the Treaty of Bangkok, signed in December 1995, which established the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, has made an important contribution to the process of nuclear disarmament and reflects the genuine commitment of the Southeast Asian States to disarmament goals. We look forward to the accession of the nuclear Powers to the Protocol of the Bangkok Treaty at an early date.

My delegation welcomes the recent entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Chemical Weapons Convention. Committed as we are to that Convention, preparations are underway for its ratification by Malaysia in the near future. We are also happy to note the recent progress made in the work of the ad hoc group of the States parties to the Biological Weapons Convention, particularly as it pertains to the legally binding verification protocol of the Convention.

My delegation has consistently maintained its support for the international efforts to ban anti-personnel landmines. Given their devastating effects on innocent civilian populations, mostly women and children among them, and other related security and socio-economic problems, Malaysia has joined other States in calling for serious rethinking of existing military doctrines that legitimize the use of these horrific weapons. We participated in the recent Oslo conference to negotiate the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and we look forward to signing it in Ottawa at the end of this year. We strongly urge the major military Powers that have decided to stay out of the Convention to rethink their position and join the rest of the international community in signing the Convention so as to ensure its universality. They should in fact be taking the lead on this issue.

We must continue to keep our focus on the disarmament agenda and to exert every effort to benefit from the peace dividend that accrued following the end of the cold war. We should guard ourselves against sliding into a false sense of security and complacency following the disarmament breakthroughs of recent years, important though they may be. We should remind ourselves that the current window of opportunity for further major breakthroughs in disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, may well be a narrow one, and that another opportunity might not present itself again in our lifetime. We should take advantage of the current stability in the international political system to extricate ourselves from the nuclear dilemma. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations to take advantage of this rare historic opportunity so as to pave the way for the realization of the vision of a nuclear-free world, perhaps in the not too distant future.

In this regard, therefore, my delegation welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General to revitalize the work of the united Nations in the disarmament field. We welcome his proposal to reconstitute the Centre for Disarmament Affairs as the Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. However, we would urge that the new department give priority attention to nuclear disarmament, even as it grapples with other equally pressing aspects of disarmament. My delegation believes that a revamped and

revitalized Secretariat Department of Disarmament and Arms Regulation will have a vital role to play in servicing the intergovernmental disarmament process and in keeping the issue of disarmament at the centre of United Nations concerns.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to recognize and commend the supportive catalytic role of civil society, as represented by the relevant non-governmental organizations, in the disarmament process. We believe that the intergovernmental process can derive tremendous benefit from closer interaction and cooperation with such organizations.

Mr. Valencia Rodríguez (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I wish at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you warmly on behalf of my delegation on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We pledge all the cooperation you will need to carry out your important mandate. My congratulations go also to the other members of the Bureau in advance of their election.

Let me also thank the former Chairman, Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou, Permanent Representative of Belarus to the United Nations, for his skilful guidance of the work of the Committee at the last session.

Ecuador is a member of the Rio Group, and its position will be outlined in this debate by the coordinator of that group, the representative of Paraguay. I should, however, like to make a few additional comments.

Despite the progress achieved of late in the field of disarmament, to which the Secretary-General has referred in paragraph 123 of his report "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" [A/51/950], the existence of nuclear weapons continues to pose a grave threat to mankind. In fact, the unjustified accumulation and development of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction continues, and the unbridled weapons trade continues to threaten the security and stability of vast regions of the world.

The International Court of Justice arrived at the unanimous conclusion that it was the obligation of all States to undertake in good faith and to conclude negotiations with a view to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. As a result, bilateral and multilateral negotiations to eliminate the massive nuclear-arms arsenals are a matter of top priority in order to comply with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

On the basis of the various statements made by the Rio Group, Ecuador reiterates its firm conviction that it is necessary to insist on the validity of those commitments. Hence, the signing and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) will support the general process of disarmament and contribute to promoting trust among all States, both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States, thus avoiding the incalculable damage that might be caused by the existence of those arsenals.

This unswerving position of Ecuador has led it to endorse the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Therefore, it supports the negotiations on a phased programme for nuclear disarmament and for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a give time-frame. That plan would include three stages. The first step would be a universal and legally binding multilateral agreement that would commit all States to achieving the objective of totally eliminating nuclear weapons. Secondly, an agreement would be reached on the future necessary measures for this phased programme with timetables for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. And, finally, we should arrive at a treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other explosive nuclear devices, taking into account the report of the Special Coordinator on this issue and other opinions on the scope of the treaty. It is true that these proposals did not find consensus in the Conference on Disarmament, but it is necessary to insist on them in order to create international awareness.

The dissemination of technology and material for the manufacturing of nuclear weapons and the increased interest in procuring biological and chemical weapons, as well as the corresponding vector systems, continue to be a growing threat. However, we must welcome the entry into force of a new legal instrument, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). The establishment of an Organization entrusted with the effective implementation of the complex verification mechanism established in the Convention is an essential step contributing to the process of disarmament. On 6 May 1997 Ecuador informed that Organization that in our country there are no installations for the manufacturing of chemical weapons or of any similar kind of weapon.

Equally, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), in force since 1975, has gained particular impetus

from the consideration of the measures and mechanisms appropriate for strengthening it. I am pleased to recognize that the parties to that Convention are negotiating a protocol to that instrument. We hope that a decision will soon be taken on establishing institutional verification mechanisms.

Ecuador believes it necessary to reiterate the urgency of reaching an agreement on effective international arrangements to provide safeguards for non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons. In this regard, the nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States need to reach a common formula that could be included in an international and legally binding instrument. My delegation would like to emphasize in particular Security Council resolution 984 (1995), in which the Council recognized:

> "the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to receive assurances that the Security Council, and above all its nuclear-weapon State permanent members, will act immediately in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, in the event that such States are the victim of an act of, or object of a threat of, aggression in which nuclear weapons are used". [Security Council resolution 984 (1995), para. 2]

This has preserved and duly protected the right of legitimate defence, both individual and collective, provided for in Article 51 of the Charter — a right that my country believes is one of the pillars underlying international coexistence and a guarantee for the respect of the territorial integrity of States.

The General Assembly has adopted various resolutions on measures to halt the transfer and illicit use of conventional weapons. Ecuador attaches particular importance to this issue and has complied with its obligation to provide information to the Register of Conventional Arms. It feels that regional disarmament must be accompanied by measures and initiatives for conventional disarmament on a global scale, taking into account the fact that the major Powers have more than 75 per cent of the conventional military power in the world. Along the same lines, Ecuador expresses its concern at the imbalance of weapons among States within a single region. Such imbalances, far from providing greater security to those who have more weapons, ultimately increase insecurity in the entire region by encouraging an unbridled arms race. That situation, in which the small countries with limited military means are at the greatest disadvantage, can be resolved only through regional disarmament agreements, because these imbalances cause regional instability and insecurity.

In order to promote confidence measures at the regional and subregional levels, I wish to report that on 18 July 1997, the President of Ecuador, Mr. Fabián Alarcón, sent to former President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace, a reply from the Ecuadorian Government supporting the initiative that the countries of the Latin American region should declare a two-year moratorium on the purchase of high-technology weapons from the United States, given the decision of that country to lift the ban on providing weapons to Latin America.

This position clearly shows the concern of Ecuador over the dangers of an arms race, which could be unleashed despite the advances of the democratization process in the region. This situation could lead to a massive diversion of the resources that are so necessary for the socio-economic development of our countries. The ultimate objective of all of these efforts must be the integration of the region into a peaceful and non-violent world order. Humankind must not be taken hostage by the technological arms race. The historical stance of Ecuador, a peace-loving country, has led it to reaffirm that the general and complete disarmament process, under effective international control, must move forward with firm steps, responding to the legal and moral conscience of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, which are pioneers in this area, as evidenced by the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

At the most recent General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), Ecuador supported a resolution in which the American continent was declared a zone free of anti-personnel mines. We believe that the international community must continue its efforts to reach agreement on a total ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of this class of weapon. At the Diplomatic Conference in Oslo which adopted the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, the delegation of Ecuador made the following statement:

> "Ecuador, in accordance with the foreign policy principles that are enshrined in its Constitution, supports the Convention because it believes that it will strengthen and perfect the principles of international humanitarian law, conceived as the standards of *jus cogens*. It also declares that the total prohibition of the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-

personnel mines must be accompanied by policies of strict compliance with disarmament Conventions, in particular in relation to the control of strategic arms".

My country believes that transparency measures for compliance with the Convention must be strictly applied. In particular, I wish to highlight the importance of the provisions of paragraph 1 of article 1, under which

"Each State Party undertakes never under any circumstances:

"(b) To develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer to anyone, directly or indirectly, anti-personnel mines".

Similarly, we support strengthening the trust fund for the removal of mines, and hold that the countries that produce and export these devices have the greatest responsibility in this respect. We also consider that greater attention should be given to a data bank to provide information about the danger of mines and the means for their removal.

As for the function of science and technology in the context of international security and disarmament, Ecuador feels that the progress achieved in this area must be used for the benefit of all of humankind so as to promote the sustainable economic and social development of all States and to safeguard international security. We must also promote international cooperation in the use of science and technology for peaceful purposes.

The Eleventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Cartagena de Indias in October 1995, drew attention to the need to focus more on economic development issues and on the enormous sums spent by the major Powers on weapons, primarily nuclear weapons. Ecuador therefore believes that it is necessary to urge the international community again to devote to economic and social development part of the resources released as a result of the implementation of disarmament and arms limitation agreements, so as to reduce the growing disparity between developed and developing countries. We need to ensure the full implementation of the recommendations for action approved at that international conference on the relationship between disarmament and development.

The philosophy behind this appeal is that peace and security will be effectively supported when the greatest percentage of resources released through disarmament policies can be used to promote the socio-economic development of all. There is a close relationship between peace, collective security, overall development and international law. These are all essential elements to ensure a stable international order. No one can feel safe until dialogue and negotiation replace, once and for all, confrontation and war, which impede the possibility of development for peoples and endanger their stability and democracy.

Ecuador believes that it is important that the fourth session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament be held, if possible, in 1999. It hopes that the agenda will deal exhaustively with issues of conventional disarmament. In this matter, my delegation supports the position expressed on various occasions by the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Ecuador supports the important work being carried out by the Conference on Disarmament, as the only multilateral negotiating body. Paragraph 14 of the report of the Conference, contained in document A/52/27, records that since 1982 requests for membership have been received from various countries, including Ecuador. Our interest in being included in the Conference with full rights is based on the genuinely and resolutely peaceful calling of my country, and on the fact that our contribution to debates and in forums is and will continue to be constant and active. We therefore believe that a prompt solution is required with regard to an increase in the number of members of the Conference on Disarmament.

The Chairman: I would like to remind members that in accordance with the Committee's decision, the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items will be closed today at 6 p.m. I urge interested delegations to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

United Nations A/C.1/52/PV.4

General Assembly

Official Records

First Committee

4th Meeting
Tuesday, 14 October 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: Mr. Nkgowe . . . . . (Botswana)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 62-82 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Pearson (New Zealand): First let me congratulate you, Sir, on your appointment as Chairman of this Committee. I assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

I want to take the opportunity today to focus on our achievements as well as our unfinished agenda for disarmament. First, let me touch on the good news.

This has been an especially good year for global disarmament. We have seen a major overhaul of nuclear safeguards approved in Vienna, in May, which will bolster the International Atomic Energy Agency's ability to detect clandestine activities. This is a need, unfortunately, which has been shown still to exist in today's world.

In April this year, the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force. As the first treaty to outlaw an entire class of weapons while providing a verification system to ensure that parties comply with its provisions, this is a truly historic achievement in the field of disarmament and one New Zealand very much welcomes. We urge those countries that have not yet done so to ratify the treaty without delay.

Efforts to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention continue. The last round of Ad Hoc Group negotiations in Geneva made good progress towards this end. There is the prospect of a verification protocol being concluded by the middle of 1999 if the momentum of these negotiations is maintained and Governments lose no time next year in bringing them to an early conclusion.

The United States Senate gave its consent this year to the START II Treaty, which is another significant step forward. New Zealand joins all other countries in urging the Duma in Russia to endorse this Treaty soon. We also fully support moves to begin negotiations on START III, as agreed by Presidents Yeltsin and Clinton in March. START III would be a further huge step forward. We also think it is time for other nuclear weapon States to join this process.

We welcome the recent agreement for United States assistance to Russia on a Cooperative Threat Reduction programme and, in the context of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), the significant new measures that will have the effect of reducing conventional arms.

A major success this year has been the conclusion of negotiations to secure a ban on the production, use, transfer and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines. In less than a year, a new international norm banning an indiscriminate weapon has been established, which is perhaps something of a record in the field of arms control.

The Ottawa treaty has the full support of New Zealand. The humanitarian disaster caused by landmines has captured the attention of so many people who are at a loss to understand why these weapons have not been banned earlier.

97-86212 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

We want to see as many countries as possible sign the Ottawa treaty next month in Canada. We hope, too, that early ratification will lead to entry into force without delay. We urge those that may not yet be in a position to sign to work strenuously towards achieving this goal as soon as possible.

The Ottawa treaty is only the beginning of a process to rid the world of these indiscriminate killers. The task before all of us is enormous and it will require ongoing commitment and support from the world community. New Zealand has already been active in assisting with demining operations in a number of mine-affected countries. We shall continue to devote resources to this compelling need.

The Ottawa process has demonstrated that there are circumstances in which coalitions of like-minded countries are able to gather sufficient support to establish new international norms. It has shown, too, that the disarmament agenda can be moved forward when there is sufficient political will. And it has demonstrated that humanitarian needs do not have to be held hostage to vested interests when international imperatives demand otherwise.

Fortunately, there are steps that countries can pursue independently and collectively. New Zealand has been a longstanding supporter of the legal commitments that can contribute to international security through nuclear-weapon-free zones. This year we shall again be co-sponsoring a draft resolution that seeks to enhance political cooperation between the zones of the southern hemisphere, without restricting the rights of free passage. We urge representatives to support this year's text.

We note with satisfaction that seven countries have ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. This remains a priority for New Zealand, not simply because it marks an end to testing, but because it is a step in the direction of nuclear disarmament. We hope that the number of ratifications will swell during the course of next year, and we urge all countries to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. We are pleased that the Provisional Technical Secretariat, which was established earlier this year, has put itself on the front foot, and we are looking forward to the first phases of the international monitoring system being established. There should be no doubt that this treaty, and its States signatories, mean business.

We should all remain mindful of the importance of continuing to focus attention on conventional arms. The imperative here is no less urgent. We welcome the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, which offers some useful suggestions on the way forward. The report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms also contains some helpful ideas. I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the Register, and the goal of expanding its scope.

Looking ahead, we hope that delegations will begin to focus soon on the next meeting of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference Preparatory Committee in Geneva, to ensure practical and constructive outcomes that will lead to the full implementation of the NPT provisions.

Let me now touch on some bad news.

Unfortunately, 1997 was not a good year for the Conference on Disarmament. Not only did it distinguish itself by failing to engage in a programme of work, it had difficulty agreeing on how to record this non-event in its annual report to this Committee. Equally worrying is that there are some in the Conference on Disarmament who seem unsure about exactly what a programme of work is.

These are not encouraging signs for a body that claims repeatedly to be the sole multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament. If this deadlock and seemingly endless preoccupation with process continues during the next year, there is a risk that the credibility of the Conference on Disarmament will be called into question by the international community. And, as the United Nations moves towards budgeting based on outputs, a body that does not produce results will have a hard time convincing the General Assembly to continue to allocate it the considerable resources it currently enjoys.

This year, the Conference on Disarmament was able to reflect on questions such as its future membership, functioning and agenda. Disappointingly, these debates indicate that there is little disposition to entertain change. Claims that the Conference on Disarmament is a unique forum and should therefore remain immune to change must be dismissed.

To stay viable, the Conference on Disarmament must be open, without preconditions, to any new members that wish to exercise their commitment to arms control and disarmament. We consider there is no point in engaging in a debate in the Conference on Disarmament about what might or might not be its optimum size. And the Conference must assume more responsibility and

accountability for pursuing the calls for action that come from this Committee.

Despite these shortcomings, New Zealand remains committed to the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference has shown in the past that it is able to deliver; the challenge next year will be to prove that it is still capable of doing so. It is not a factory for mass-producing new disarmament instruments. But if there is to be any chance of progress next year, there will have to be a greater willingness on the part of some of its members, at both ends of the spectrum, to entertain movement and engage in compromise.

For New Zealand, the priorities are clear. The Conference on Disarmament must begin to address nuclear disarmament. It is simply not creditable for countries in this Committee to repeatedly endorse the need for nuclear disarmament in United Nations resolutions only to find that debate on these issues is suffocated in Geneva. Nor does it make any sense to the people we represent.

The time has come, we believe, for the Conference on Disarmament to demonstrate some leadership on nuclear issues. The International Court of Justice has confirmed that there is indeed an obligation to pursue and conclude negotiations leading to complete nuclear disarmament. Leadership in the Conference on Disarmament would help to build confidence and, in doing so, strengthen the non-proliferation norms.

Attempts in the past to package negotiations on nuclear issues into time-bound outcomes is not a productive way to proceed, however. Nor does New Zealand consider that progress on nuclear issues should be linked to progress in other areas of arms control. These are tactics for failure, in our view.

The way ahead is to probe the middle ground and to do so without indulging in preconditions. We should begin the process by opening a dialogue on nuclear issues in a manner that is both transparent and constructive. The challenge is to identify where like-minded countries can add value now to the process being undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States. A dialogue with these clear aims would support and not undermine efforts being pursued elsewhere.

A blueprint for action, some aspects of which can be undertaken by the nuclear-weapon States themselves, and some of which lend themselves to multilateral action in the Conference on Disarmament, already exists in the report of the Canberra Commission. This is a serious and compelling study. We commend it unreservedly. It proposes a number of logical and practical steps that would serve to enhance stability and security as we pursue our obligation to work towards a nuclear-free world. As a first, immediate step, we would endorse the Commission's call for the five nuclear-weapon States to commit themselves unequivocally to proceeding to a world without nuclear weapons.

The Commission's report goes to the heart of the issues we need to address in a dialogue and points us in a direction that would add real value to bilateral negotiations.

There has never been a better moment to open up a dialogue on nuclear issues. There is a discernible and growing trust and confidence between the major Powers. Nuclear weapons must not become a natural or inevitable feature of our society. The fact that they have not been used for 50 years does not mean that the risks are in any way lessened as time goes by. The longer we retain them, the greater the temptation for others to acquire them.

New Zealand is also ready to start work now on fissile cut-off negotiations in a way that recognizes the differing views on their scope. We continue to believe that such a step might be complemented by a register of stocks and by a verifiable instrument which ensures an end to the production of new weapons. Negotiations on a cut-off treaty, as agreed in the Shannon mandate for an Ad Hoc Committee in the Conference on Disarmament, is a challenge we can and should meet.

We have a weighty agenda before us and one that carries a heavy responsibility. This year has indeed been a significant one for moving forward, but it is not the moment to indulge in a pause. The challenge before us is to ensure that our achievements can be matched with same degree of commitment and movement next year and beyond.

Mr. Holum (United States of America): It is an honour once again to present the views of the United States on important international security issues before this Committee. My delegation congratulates you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to lead this body's work and pledges its full support.

In his address to the General Assembly last month, President Clinton spoke of the great tide of global integration and the resulting need for a new security strategy.

Security is an increasingly broad concept, involving not only defence but such issues as economics and the environment, science and information, combating drugs and terrorism, and education and human rights. But arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament remain vital components. The threats posed by weapons of mass destruction are far from being extinguished, and the consequences of miscalculation or deliberate acts can be horrific, as we know from the terrorist activities of a cult group armed with nerve gas in Japan, biological and toxin weapons in Iraq and persistent reports and risks of nuclear smuggling. And, with grim regularity, thousands of lives are lost in conventional conflicts.

These sobering realities should spur us. Each time we sit down to negotiate, we need to grasp all the progress we can. When we sit down, as I noted a year ago in the Committee, we should do so in a forum right for the given task. Today, I want to underscore another, increasingly pertinent condition for success — that, even as we aspire to the loftiest goals, we aim in the near term for the kind of focused, practical steps by which arms control is not just argued, but actually achieved. Let us not stand immobile, longing for the stars, but resolve to keep moving surely towards them, with deliberate strides.

The First Committee has a particular responsibility. It meets to help the international community establish those realistic goals and to provide the orientation needed to make real negotiating work possible.

The achievements of the past year well illustrate what can happen when realism prevails. In September 1996, the General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. It does not make nuclear arms obsolete in a single stroke, but it will curb both horizontal and vertical proliferation and bring nuclear disarmament closer.

The enhanced review process for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is proceeding. With Brazil's most welcome decision to accede to the Treaty, the NPT will soon be just four nations short of universality. Meanwhile, advancing steadily among like-minded countries while accounting for the security requirements of others, nuclear-weapon-free zones now span entire continents.

The pace of nuclear disarmament is picking up, largely because the countries whose arms are directly involved have moved in bold but practical increments. START I reductions are ahead of schedule, and this year Russia and the United States have cleared away all remaining obstacles to Duma ratification of START II.

Concerns that Russia would have to build additional single-warhead missiles to maintain parity while destroying multiple-warhead ICBMs were answered by our Presidents at Helsinki in March and reiterated when Secretary Albright and Foreign Minister Primakov signed a Treaty Protocol here in New York last month. Immediately after START II is ratified, we and Russia will begin negotiations on further reductions deep enough to obviate any reason for such a build-up.

Concerns about compliance costs have been addressed in that Treaty Protocol by extending the START II elimination timetable to 2007. At the same time, the United States and Russia ensured that START II's security benefits will be realized as soon as possible through deactivation by the end of 2003 of the strategic nuclear-delivery vehicles slated for elimination.

Concerns about the viability of the 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems were also answered last month, when Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan and the United States signed agreements on Treaty succession and on demarcation between theatre and strategic defences.

Together with the new cooperative relationship between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Russia embodied in the Founding Act, these steps have set the stage for early Russian ratification and entry into force of START II, so that we can move on to even deeper reductions and more comprehensive controls on nuclear arms. In this Committee, the Russian and American delegations will urge adoption of a draft resolution supporting this process, upon which so much of our future security rests.

Also in the past year, the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force. We were proud to be able to deposit our instrument of ratification in April so that the United States could be among the original Parties.

On conventional arms, Parties to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe have agreed to aim for further reductions in Treaty-limited equipment. In Latin America, the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) has proposed to help reduce the demand for arms through a legal framework for advance notification of major arms acquisitions.

How does this remarkable and diverse record of achievement guide us towards an even-more secure future? How can President Clinton's call to meet the challenge of global integration be pursued specifically in arms control? The answer is: by assigning the right task to the right venue and, as I want to amplify here today, by orienting our work less towards idealized visions and more towards practical results.

How does that apply to a number of key priorities? First, the practical approach calls for consolidating and realizing the full fruits of what we have already agreed, through entry into force and compliance, enforcement and implementation. This, after all, is where the practical value of arms control is realized: not only in ceremonies and signatures, but in threats averted, in weapons physically eliminated or avoided, in resources saved for better uses.

This means, for example, that our respective Governments need to secure approval for the ratifications necessary to make the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty a functioning and enduring reality. We commend Japan and the other States that have already ratified the Treaty. As he announced here on 22 September, President Clinton has transmitted the Treaty to the United States Senate for its early and favourable advice and consent.

Also to secure the benefits of existing agreements, commitments to organizations such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are crucial. It falls to each country to apply the powerful new safeguards adopted in May to the real world, by upgrading bilateral agreements with the IAEA.

Arms-control compliance is served by the combination of deterrence, through verification and the risk of sanctions, and political commitment. The United Nations has a vital role in stimulating Governments and people everywhere to take compliance seriously. The United States draft resolution this year in this Committee will re-emphasize this point.

Secondly, in strategic arms control, a practical orientation means tangible steps ahead. Just as soon as START II is ratified, START III negotiations will be under way, aimed at ceilings of 2,000 to 2,500 warheads — leaving only about 20 per cent of peak cold-war levels. Indeed, President Clinton and President Yeltsin have already set a timetable of 2007 for this next dramatic disarmament step.

In a first for arms control, our Presidents have also agreed that START III will include the actual destruction not only of means of delivery, but of nuclear warheads themselves. It will also embrace transparency measures to ensure that nuclear material from destroyed warheads will never again be used in weapons.

We are also coming to terms with an alarming potential side effect of nuclear disarmament: the possibility that excess nuclear materials could be diverted, to serve nuclear ambitions elsewhere. The nuclear-weapon States have a particular responsibility to set aside rigid rules of secrecy in the storage and disposition of nuclear warheads and fissile materials, and to adopt fresh approaches to transparency and cooperation. We should aim for the fastest possible pace of irreversible reductions, and the safe and secure storage, and ultimate disposition, of the highly enriched uranium and plutonium recovered from dismantled arms.

Thirdly, another leading priority is the work of the ad hoc group to strengthen the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Here, as we intensify our work next year, realism means most of all simply recognizing the core purpose of the effort, to protect all humanity from the depraved proposition that deadly diseases we have struggled to eradicate — plague, botulinum, anthrax and others — would be nurtured and deliberately inflicted as weapons of war. Open-ended technology transfer is neither the purpose of the exercise nor a legitimate price of success.

Fourthly, lest there be any doubt, let me stress that the United States has not given up on the negotiation of a ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. In their 25 September statement, the Foreign Ministers of the permanent members of the Security Council reaffirmed their conviction that such negotiations should begin immediately and conclude at an early date. We all agree to pursue the process of nuclear disarmament. It is past time to agree to take the next logical multilateral step in that process.

Who can be against it? A cut-off in the production of fissile material will threaten no one. It will set in place an upper bound, a cap, on the amount of nuclear-weapons material in the world. How can we achieve reduced roles for nuclear weapons if we cannot even begin discussing a cap on their indispensable contents?

Fifthly, we also have much more practical work to do to end the civilian carnage from anti-personnel landmines. The United States worked diligently leading up to and in

Oslo to find an outcome to the Ottawa process that would be compatible with its security requirements. What emerged was a result we can welcome but cannot join. The Ottawa Convention would rule out military options we cannot now do without: to use anti-personnel landmines of types or in ways, I would stress, that are not part of the humanitarian threat of long-lived, undetectable mines scattered in unmarked fields.

All countries in a position to do so should sign the Ottawa Convention. Then I urge that we turn to the critical and challenging landmine work that still lies ahead.

Worldwide, for the foreseeable future, there will be many more people, and many more mines, outside the Ottawa Convention than inside. Now that its content and likely membership is settled, the question should be how, given these realities, can we best reduce the loss of human life to anti-personnel landmines? Clearly, the answer is that each process should make its maximum contribution, so that their sum will be greater than the result in any single forum.

On this issue the Conference on Disarmament unfortunately has shown that it is prepared neither for long strides nor for a quick start. To the extent the Conference on Disarmament was seen as competition to Ottawa, at least one impediment should be behind us. In any event, let us recall that the Conference does include all the major historic landmine producers and exporters, and many members believe it should undertake anti-personnel landmine disarmament. The United States will strongly support Conference on Disarmament negotiations on anti-personnel landmines, beginning with a ban on exports next year.

We also urge prompt ratification of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Amended Protocol II, which, again, includes the major landmine States not part of the Ottawa process, and deals specifically with long-lived, non-detectable mines. The humanitarian benefit can be immense.

As we deal with mines not yet emplaced we must, of course, also be mindful of a distinct bottom line — that every mine removed from the ground is another innocent victim potentially saved. The United States currently spends almost as much on demining as the rest of the world combined. President Clinton has directed that we significantly increase our demining efforts, beginning with a 25 per cent increase in funds next year.

These two issues, the fissile material cut-off and anti-personnel landmines, underscore the dangers to disarmament of the approach opposite to what I advocate here. The Conference on Disarmament is in the grip of a linkage virus. It not only insists on maximum results on one subject, but insists that all other progress must cease until we agree to that step — a timetable for elimination of all nuclear weapons.

I will risk repetition to state our view that the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating body, not a debating society, and negotiations in Geneva should address matters of global reach that require broadly representative participation.

But the linkage disease is impossibility squared — a proposal in effect to stall the proven step-by-step approach by the United States and Russia that is in fact bringing nuclear disarmament closer, and then to drag all possible progress on other issues into the same morass. That linkage virus has paralysed the Conference on Disarmament. We will see if it proves to be fatal.

Finally, realism should prevail in the ways in which we organize ourselves to pursue arms control. To function well over time, every organization must be prepared to adapt to change.

The United Nations Secretariat's support of arms control should be reorganized and reformed. The Centre for Disarmament Affairs should revitalize its support for the work of the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament, and be prepared to support new tasks.

If I may speak parochially for a moment, the United States is also reorganizing its arms-control operations, by integrating the 38-year-old agency that I have been privileged to lead, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, into the Department of State.

This step, I want to assure the Committee, is intended to and will enhance the role of arms control and non-proliferation in United States foreign policy. President Clinton and Secretary Albright have agreed that independent policy advocacy and compliance reviews will be preserved through reporting from the Department's senior arms-control official directly to the President and the national-security leadership. At the same time, the Agency's expertise and operational resources will be combined with those of the State Department in a new set of bureaux, to give these issues even greater prominence in our diplomacy and national-security strategy. The plan thus

protects the core value of an independent agency, while capturing the benefits, in both efficiency and efficacy, of combining forces with a strengthened and revitalized Department of State.

I have sought to sketch out an arms control approach to global security as the decade, century and millennium draw to a close. This approach is avowedly practical in design. It is rooted in the conviction, reinforced by all our experience, that taking one logical step after another is the best way to achieve long-term success.

Our work has never been more vital. Yet major parts of it are stalled, ensnared in a combination of outmoded political alignments and new techniques of diversion and delay. Let us break free of these shackles. Let us turn down our megaphones, roll up our sleeves, and get back to work.

Mr. Hayashi (Japan): May I begin, Sir, by extending, on behalf of the Japanese delegation, my warm congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee of the General Assembly during its fifty-second session. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you lead the important work of this Committee.

Since the cold-war era, the international community has made remarkable progress in the field of disarmament with, for example, the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. On the other hand, however, we are witnessing numerous regional armed conflicts and the danger of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. It should also be noted that the Conference on Disarmament was unable this year to overcome member States' divergence of views in its efforts to define the future direction of disarmament.

Japan, as a peace-loving country which upholds its three non-nuclear principles — not to produce nuclear weapons, not to possess them, and not to permit their introduction into its territory — and which maintains its military forces strictly for self-defence purposes, regards its contributions to world disarmament efforts as one of the most important pillars of its foreign policy. As Japan has expressed on various occasions, we must not waste precious time engaging in sterile arguments. Indeed, the time has come when it is incumbent upon each country to offer the international community its wisest counsel and to take action for the steady advancement of disarmament. With the development of the mass media and the growing influence of civil society, including the growth of non-governmental organizations, international public opinion now has the power to spur progress in disarmament. Idealism that pays little attention to reality cannot advance disarmament, but neither can realism which is not grounded in ideals. Japan, while upholding the lofty ideal of complete disarmament, will continue to appeal to the international community to aim at steady progress in disarmament through concrete measures, taken one by one.

Based on this view, Japan continues to make the utmost effort to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. As part of these efforts, Japan intends to reintroduce in the First Committee this year a draft resolution aimed at achieving the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons, a resolution on which it has taken the initiative since 1994. My delegation is grateful for and encouraged by the overwhelming support which this resolution has gained among member States, and it believes this resolution has contributed to the consolidation throughout the international community of the view that nuclear weapons should eventually be abolished, once and for all.

At the same time, Japan intends to buckle down in its effort to address the issue of conventional arms, particularly anti-personnel landmines and small arms, which every day pose very real threats to human life and regional stability.

Japan attaches great importance to the Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral negotiating body in the disarmament field. As I noted earlier, because of the divergence of views, the Conference unfortunately could not embark upon concrete work this year. It was particularly regrettable that the Conference was unable to reach an agreement on the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on a cut-off treaty which would ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. This failure is especially disappointing in view of the fact that the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), stipulated that after the CTBT the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on such a treaty would be the most important measure to be taken to advance nuclear disarmament, and also since the majority of member States in the Conference on Disarmament this year did not object to the commencement of negotiations.

This year the Conference demonstrated, quite unwittingly, that disarmament cannot be promoted through confrontation. My delegation strongly hopes that next year the Conference will be able to forge a realistic compromise so that it can make substantial progress in nuclear disarmament.

Japan, which is one of the strongest advocates for the elimination of nuclear weapons, has repeatedly insisted that if we are to make progress towards this goal, it is imperative that we make steady and cumulative efforts through realistic and concrete measures. As Foreign Minister Obuchi stated before the General Assembly last month, Japan, together with other like-minded countries, will continue to emphasize the importance of this approach.

While remaining committed to the immediate commencement of negotiations on a cut-off treaty, Japan believes it would be worthwhile to commence immediately discussions on at least the technical aspects of such a treaty. This could serve as a means of paving the way for negotiations on the treaty per se. My delegation wishes to recall that in the case of the CTBT, the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Cooperative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events proceeded with technical work over an extended period of time prior to the commencement of CTBT negotiations. In the case of the cut-off treaty, it is expected that the negotiations will involve exceedingly complex technical issues which will also be closely related to political decisions. Thus the pigeonholing of technical issues in advance will be all the more useful in our work for this treaty.

In addition to the issue of nuclear disarmament, it is important that the Conference on Disarmament grapple with issues related to conventional weapons disarmament, particularly the question of anti-personnel landmines. My delegation believes the Conference can make a significant contribution in this area because it has both the participation of key countries and the expertise and negotiating experience to forge a treaty which takes into account each country's security concerns as well as humanitarian concerns.

Permit me to take this opportunity to present the comprehensive approach that Japan has taken on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. In the context of international efforts to address this issue, Japan has identified four important tasks: first, to contribute to international efforts to achieve a total ban on anti-personnel landmines while promoting legally binding controls over their use and transfer; secondly, to assist demining efforts by the United Nations and other international organizations; thirdly, to develop technology for mine detection and clearance; and fourthly, to assist victims of landmines.

Concerning the first task, Japan shares the international community's objective of banning and eliminating anti-personnel landmines. In June of this year Japan ratified the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, becoming the fifth country to do so, in the belief that the early entry into force of the Protocol is an important part of international efforts to address the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

Japan appreciates the Ottawa process, and regards it as an important step by the international community towards the banning of anti-personnel landmines. The Government of Japan is now in the process of deciding whether to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which will be opened for signature at the Ottawa conference; but whether it does so or not, it is convinced that the international community must continue to strive to achieve the universal and effective elimination of anti-personnel landmines. In this connection, Japan is of the view that we need to strengthen the efforts in the Conference on Disarmament towards the early start of negotiations on a treaty.

In addition to working towards a legal ban on anti-personnel landmines, Japan has been making vigorous efforts to address the problems such weapons cause. In addition to making financial contributions to demining efforts and assistance to victims, Japan held the Tokyo Conference on Anti-Personnel Landmines last March, where many participating countries explored ways and means of clearing mines and extending assistance to victims. In so doing, Japan sought to strengthen international cooperation in this important area; it intends to continue its efforts in this regard.

Small arms are another issue in the field of conventional weapons that demands the attention of the international community. Unlike the case of weapons of mass destruction, there are no agreed global norms or standards regarding the control of small arms. It is these weapons that are used most often in the regional conflicts that have been erupting with increasing frequency since the end of the cold war, taking a tremendous toll in human life and causing massive flows of refugees in many parts of the

world. The accumulation of small arms is not in itself a cause of conflict, but it can intensify and prolong conflicts, leading to a violent rather than a peaceful resolution of a conflict and generating a vicious cycle of greater insecurity, which in turn leads to increased demands for and use of such weapons.

The General Assembly has adopted several resolutions relating to the illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons. In 1995, it adopted resolution 50/70 B, entitled "Small arms", on which Japan took the initiative, with a view to conducting a full-scale study of the issue. Based on that resolution, the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms was established last year; this summer it adopted by consensus its report, which the Secretary-General has submitted to the General Assembly at this session. Japan welcomes these developments and intends to submit a draft resolution on this issue in the First Committee later this year. It is our earnest hope that the international community will maintain the momentum that has been generated and will continue to examine measures to solve this problem.

Let me mention one more issue in the domain of conventional weapons, namely transparency in armaments. We welcome in this regard the adoption of the report by the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms on the operation and further development of the Register. Japan highly values the role the Register is playing in preventing the excessive accumulation of conventional arms which can cause regional instability, and we will continue our efforts to further enhance the Register so that it can respond effectively to the challenges that are confronting it.

Now I would like to turn our attention to the tasks that lie ahead in view of the recent developments that have been made in the field of nuclear-weapons disarmament. The first relates to the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which was adopted at the General Assembly last year by an overwhelming majority. I would like to note that as of today as many as 148 Member States have signed the Treaty. In our view, this is proof of the strong desire throughout the international community to put an end to nuclear testing and to promote nuclear disarmament.

Japan, for its part, deposited its instrument of ratification on 8 July this year, thus becoming the fourth State party to the Treaty. I might add that among the 44 countries which must ratify the Treaty in order for it to enter into force, Japan is the first to have done so. My Government hopes that there will be a strong show of support by the international community for the entry into force of the Treaty, and that every country will ratify it without delay. In particular, however, we would like to call upon those countries which have expressed opposition to the Treaty to reconsider their positions so that the Treaty can enter into force at the earliest possible date. In the meantime, Japan is confident that in the light of the Treaty's adoption and of the widespread support it enjoys, nuclear testing will never again be conducted anywhere in the world.

In addition to efforts for the early entry into force of the Treaty, it is important to prepare a smooth implementation mechanism. We therefore note with satisfaction that the provisional technical secretariat commenced its work in Vienna last March, based on the agreement reached by the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. Secondly, subsequent to the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995, the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the year-2000 review conference was held in April this year at United Nations Headquarters. At that meeting not only procedural but also substantive matters were considered, and a report containing recommendations for the next meeting of the Preparatory Committee was adopted. My delegation believes that this constitutes a good start for the newly strengthened NPT review process, which is qualitatively different from the review process prior to 1995.

Indeed, my Government regards the NPT review process as providing a valuable forum for the promotion of nuclear disarmament. It thus took the initiative at the General Assembly last year to introduce a draft resolution entitled "Nuclear disarmament with a view to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons", adopted as resolution 51/45 G, which called upon all States parties to the Treaty to make their best efforts to ensure the success of the first Preparatory Committee meeting. To follow up the resolution, the Government of Japan hosted a nuclear-disarmament seminar at Kyoto in December 1996, providing a venue for prior consultations in anticipation of meetings of the Preparatory Committee.

At the first Preparatory Committee meeting, nuclear-weapon States provided information on the measures they had taken for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This effort on the part of nuclear-weapon States was of great interest to Japan, because we believe that increased transparency in the nuclear disarmament process among

nuclear-weapon States will enhance mutual confidence between those States and non-nuclear weapon States. We expect that, building upon the achievements of the first meeting this year, further progress will be made at the second Preparatory Committee meeting to be held in Geneva next spring.

Concerning the NPT, I would be remiss if I did not refer to the decision announced in June by President Cardoso that Brazil would join the NPT. We commend Brazil for this extremely important decision, which will further enhance the universality of the NPT, and we hope that the Brazilian Congress will ratify the Treaty as soon as possible. I wish on this occasion to reiterate Japan's strong hope that, in view of the importance of the Treaty for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the very few countries remaining outside the Treaty will also make a courageous decision to join the regime, so that the Treaty enjoys universal adherence.

Thirdly, as regards the arrangements between the United States and the Russian Federation for the reduction of their nuclear arsenals — an issue which has a direct impact on nuclear disarmament — we welcome the shared commitment shown at the summit meeting in Helsinki in March to engage in further talks on the reduction of strategic forces in the context of the START process. We look forward to the commencement of negotiations of a START III treaty, in concrete terms, as the fruit of this commitment. In this connection, Japan strongly hopes that Russia will ratify START II as soon as possible and that it will lead to further reductions of nuclear weapons in the context of START III.

Let me now touch upon non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction. Japan welcomed the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention on 29 April this year, and also the fact that the United States and China became original States Parties when they ratified the Convention on April 25. We would like to call upon those countries which have not yet done so to likewise accede to the Convention at the earliest possible date.

As regards implementation, Japan observes in good faith its obligations under the Convention. It has submitted various declarations and received inspections, including inspections of its Schedule 1 facility. We are also making sincere efforts to resolve the issue of so-called abandoned chemical weapons in China, including the establishment of a joint working group with China.

As for the task of formulating a verification protocol in order to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention, it is encouraging that a rolling text was submitted to the ad hoc group by the Chairman this summer. Japan actively participates in the negotiations in the hope that an effective and efficient verification mechanism will be established.

Last but not least, the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament are making significant contributions to regional confidence-building. Japan appreciates in particular the contributions of the Kathmandu Centre, one of the facilities in Asia and the South Pacific. Referred to as the Kathmandu process, its activities enhance dialogue and promote confidence in the region. Japan will continue to extend assistance in support of its activities.

Let me conclude by returning to the message that I tried to convey at the outset. Japan attaches great importance to moving the disarmament process forward in a concrete manner, even on a gradual, step-by-step basis. It is Japan's firm belief that the only way in which we can promote action towards disarmament is to pursue a middle ground, taking into account the actual circumstances surrounding the issue. We hope that the deliberations by the First Committee will contribute to moving the international community a step forward along the path towards disarmament. I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that it is an endeavour to which Japan pledges its full support.

Mr. Moher (Canada): May I join with others, Sir, in welcoming your chairmanship of this First Committee. Canada certainly will do the maximum possible to work with you and to cooperate during this session. It is also a pleasure for us to see so many other friends of Canada on the front bench with you.

The reform of the United Nations, and the international system it symbolizes and underpins, is vital to our efforts to build a world with fewer conflicts, less suffering, more peace and prosperity for all. The reform agenda, as defined in the courageous package of initiatives proposed by the Secretary-General, is strongly supported by Canada.

This approach to fundamentally reforming the United Nations to meet new challenges in new ways must permeate the work of the General Assembly. Indeed, we believe that this spirit of reform and the will to common action should be channelled immediately and directly into the discussions, negotiations and decisions of the First Committee.

We have an opportunity — and indeed a responsibility — to create a new approach to the work of the First Committee and to set a new standard for common, practical action. My delegation will be working in this spirit.

Momentum, once lost, is difficult to regain. Inertia runs the risk of defeating our best intentions. Endless repetitions of "movement on my terms only" will not produce the results we all seek — the results that the world expects of us.

The Canadian delegation does not believe that an inability to make substantive progress in some areas of the arms control and disarmament agenda during the past year signals the collapse or uselessness of specific forums. Nor should that lack of progress suggest a so-called end-of-history argument — that is, that we have come to the end of the disarmament road. There is far too much still to be done to consider that our work is somehow completed or that we have exhausted all possible avenues for action. It is also too easy simply to blame our institutions and structures. Our inability to act on certain areas of the disarmament agenda in the past year underlines the urgent need to mobilize the political will and the creativity necessary for us to move forward.

Let us look to our priorities for action. First, we must continue to pursue effective measures to reduce and eliminate weapons of mass destruction. Important progress has been made in this past year. But much more remains to be done. We must pursue the universality of existing instruments, we must ensure their effective implementation and, for example, we must reach agreement on a protocol that will enhance the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention. While the Chemical Weapons Convention has entered into force, remaining challenges must be overcome.

In the nuclear field, we have seen some important progress this year. Just last month, on the bilateral level, the United States of America and the Russian Federation announced initiatives taken in the areas of strategic security and nuclear security that will make a positive and constructive contribution to the global nuclear arms control and disarmament agenda.

At the global level, the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review process took steps towards confirming the will conveyed by States parties to make this a strengthened, comprehensive and qualitatively different review process. We were pleased that we were able to begin to address substantive issues at the first session. Canada was also honoured last year to be able to contribute to the successful early decision to begin the implementation of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CTBT and the important steps taken to strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system are proof that the global community can act when it chooses. For its part, Canada's disarmament implementing agency is working to ensure that Canada can ratify the CTBT within the coming year.

But these actions, positive as they are, represent only a fraction of what is needed if we are to continue to make progress to reduce and to eliminate nuclear weapons. The START process must be revitalized and broadened to include other nuclear-weapon States — promises and intentions must be converted into actions; the nuclear-weapon States must progressively and dynamically demonstrate their fulfilment of their NPT obligation to negotiate in good faith and to conclude negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament; the NPT review process must continue to be a qualitatively different and enhanced exercise; and the Conference on Disarmament must overcome its current stalemate and move forward decisively and responsibly on nuclear disarmament and a fissile material cut-off treaty. There is also much to be done on other key issues, including enhanced nuclear security assurances and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Canada for its part recognizes and accepts the potential and the limits of multilateral efforts to reduce and to eliminate nuclear weapons. It is in this context that we have acknowledged the special responsibilities of the nuclear-weapon States. But this does not mean that we abdicate our engagement in this field. Like all other members of the international community, Canada has national interests at stake. We therefore expect the nuclear-weapon States to meet their responsibilities and to deliver on their commitment. For our part, we will continue to contribute through the NPT, the CTBT and the IAEA, and through the negotiation — hopefully soon — of an effective fissile material cut-off treaty. We also continue to believe that a mechanism, perhaps an ad hoc committee, should be established in the Conference on Disarmament for the purpose of substantive discussion of nuclear disarmament issues with a view to identifying if and when further multilateral measures might be negotiated. For this to happen, it is our fervent hope that the necessary combination of political judgement and will on all sides can be found in the near future.

We are all familiar with the argument that progress in a wide range of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation fields will enhance international security and contribute to the framework in which all of our goals can be achieved. While we do not accept the view put forward by some that vast and comprehensive agreement across the board is a precondition for specific progress — for example, towards the elimination of nuclear weapons — we are committed to achieving progress wherever and whenever possible.

One further domain where we believe we should act is that of outer space. Canada has specifically proposed in the Conference on Disarmament that an ad hoc committee be established to negotiate a convention banning the weaponization of outer space. We believe that this is a propitious moment to finally get work under way to prevent weapons being placed into space. We hope that our interest in beginning negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament — an interest which we know is shared by many countries — will receive careful consideration and action.

As our Minister of Foreign Affairs indicated in his speech to the General Assembly, Canada continues to be deeply concerned about conventional disarmament questions. Our efforts in this field are governed by three considerations: the need for greater transparency; the value of and necessity for dialogue; and the exercise of restraint by all States. These mutually reinforcing considerations can promote effective international cooperation. However, there is still no general global consensus on the need to act decisively on the conventional arms agenda. We believe we need to generate that consensus.

While we were pleased — perhaps "relieved" is a better word — that this year the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms reached agreement on a report, its consensus is focused on a minimalist set of conclusions. It reflects but a fraction of the imagination and ideas that emerged during the discussions. Several recommendations in the report will lead to greater clarity in reporting and thus enhance transparency. But the Register will continue to fall far short of its potential as long as military holdings and procurement through national production remain outside its purview and States erratically and sporadically submit their data. Canada continues to believe that all States should report to the United Nations Register. We regret that several regions of the world remain noticeably under-represented in reporting.

On the positive side, over time a bank of valuable data and information on the conventional arms trade is emerging. States should seek new opportunities to pursue dialogue on the implications of this data, with a view to the exercise of real restraint in the arms trade. Canada certainly believes greater use could be made of this Committee and of the Conference on Disarmament in this regard.

Canada also applauds the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms for a report that we regard as a balanced and reasonable step towards addressing the deleterious effects of excessive and destabilizing accumulations of small arms and light weapons. We support the report's recommendations, especially those relating to peacekeeping mandates and the destruction of weapons as part of post-conflict peace-building.

We encourage this Committee to endorse unanimously the Panel's report and to identify suitable follow-on work, bearing in mind that the report relates closely to the on-going efforts in the United Nations Disarmament Commission on the "Consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures". In Canada's view, effective disarmament, particularly of small arms, as well as the demobilization and reintegration measures concerning ex-combatants, should be considered as part of an integrated approach by United Nations agencies, donor groups and non-governmental organizations towards addressing the peace-building challenges in post-conflict situations.

In Canada's view, there is no better way of reminding ourselves of what the international community is truly capable of achieving than by reflecting on the dynamism and extraordinary work which culminated last month in Oslo, Norway, with the global community — Governments, non-governmental organizations and international organizations — pulling together to achieve a convention to ban the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines. This experience proves that new approaches, new conviction, new coalitions of the like-minded — Governments and civil society working together — drawn from all corners of the world, can set a goal, develop an agenda and produce clear and rapid results.

Last year not one voice was raised in dissent when the General Assembly urged States to pursue vigorously an effective, legally-binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel

mines, with a view to completing the negotiation as soon as possible. Such an agreement was reached last month in Oslo, thanks to an extraordinary partnership of countries from all regions of the world, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and countless others. It was the product of a series of international meetings — in Vienna and Bonn, and the Brussels Conference in June — where ideas were refined and precision was given to the elements of a text, the draft of which was so well and so meticulously prepared by the Government of Austria. Norway generously provided the ideal venue for the negotiation of the Treaty. South African leadership, through Ambassador Jacob Selebi, who chaired the negotiations and drove them forward with consummate skill, provided — in less than three weeks — a treaty which clearly and unambiguously establishes a new international norm against the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines.

At this point, Canada wishes to pay particular tribute to, and welcome the Nobel Prize given to, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and to Jody Williams. Their inspiring and committed work on this vital issue more than merits this wonderful recognition.

Our work does not end there. The Oslo text will be opened for signature on 3 and 4 December in Ottawa. We invite all countries to join us in becoming original signatories. We hope that those unable to sign in Ottawa in December will act to put in place unilateral restrictions on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel mines. We also hope that all countries will ratify the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and its Amended Protocol II. Canada will present its instruments of ratification for the Amended Protocol II in the coming weeks.

So the agreement reached in Oslo is just the first step. It constitutes a promise to future generations and a powerful humanitarian commitment to put an end to the suffering and casualties caused by these weapons. This is why we will use the opportunity of the Ottawa meeting, from 2 to 4 December, to gather experts from Governments, non-governmental organizations and international organizations to pull together an agenda for action. By doing so, we hope to ensure the Treaty's early entry into force and universal adherence, along with its effective implementation, in particular with regard to the eradication of anti-personnel mines and in the rehabilitation and economic and social integration of the countless victims around the world. Canada will continue to work with this extraordinary global coalition to fulfil the commitments made in the Convention and to meet the immense, continuing challenges posed by anti-personnel mines.

It is all too clear that we have not reached the end of the road in disarmament matters. We can continue to build on past progress; we can deliver nationally, bilaterally and multilaterally on our commitments; we can mobilize new and creative ways to achieve our goals.

While we need to consider — openly and frankly — the future of the First Committee in the context of other disarmament forums, several preliminary comments might be considered. We should ensure that sessions of the First Committee are well-focused and cost efficient as well as oriented towards substantive work. Canada continues to attach fundamental importance to strengthening the Conference on Disarmament as the multilateral forum for the substantive discussion of ongoing disarmament issues and for negotiations on agreed issues in that field. We should clarify the role of the Disarmament Commission, and any call for additional forums and/or multilateral consideration of disarmament issues should be evaluated in the context of those factors.

We can reform our institutions and processes to enhance our achievements. We look forward to working cooperatively with all here to make further substantive progress. For our part, Canada will be contributing to these efforts by several specific actions during this session. First, we will explore the prospects for greater consensus on a fissile material cut-off treaty negotiation in the Conference on Disarmament; secondly, we will put forward with Poland a draft resolution on the Chemical Weapons Convention, which we hope and believe will be adopted by consensus. Thirdly, a further Canadian draft resolution on verification, building on our earlier efforts, will also be advanced for adoption by consensus. Fourthly, in partnership with countries from every region of the world, we will devote a major effort to securing the widest possible co-sponsorship and support for a draft resolution designed to move the Ottawa process forward from Oslo to a successful signing ceremony in Ottawa this December.

I should like to break away from my prepared text to make a few additional comments on that last point. All delegations are aware that a draft resolution has been circulated in both Geneva and New York. We have additional copies available. I wish to emphasize that draft resolution has been deliberately prepared to be as single-focused and non-confrontational as possible. The draft was prepared by a small group of delegations; it is therefore

already a shared effort. Moreover, approximately 40 delegations have already committed to sponsor. We sincerely thank those that have moved so quickly in this respect. We welcome further sponsors as soon as possible. An open meeting of interested delegations will take place on Tuesday, 21 October, to move this process forward. Confirmation of that meeting will appear in the *Journal* on Friday morning. Our collective intention — that is, the intention of Canada and of its friends on this issue — is to submit the draft with as many initial sponsors as possible by the middle of next week. While the list of sponsors will, of course, remain open thereafter, we would like the initial list to be as comprehensive as possible. These points being made, Canada will, of course, continue to give the most careful consideration to all other proposals brought before us.

May I conclude these comments by suggesting that the Committee can mobilize to take steps that will lead to a renewed approach to action, and to finding the political will and realism necessary in order to meet the many challenges on the global disarmament agenda.

Mr. Sha Zukang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): Please permit me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that, given your outstanding talent and rich diplomatic experience, you will fulfil this mission with distinction. At the same time, I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Sychou for his contribution as Chairman of the First Committee during the last session.

The international situation continues to experience profound changes. Relations between the big Powers are undergoing major and profound adjustments. The overall strength of the developing countries and the trend towards multipolarity, as well as factors conducive to world peace are growing. The international situation as a whole is moving towards relaxation. Peace, cooperation and development have become the main themes of our times. Against such a backdrop, international arms control and disarmament have gained in depth and width over the last year.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has entered into force. The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization has started its work. The area covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones has further expanded. Negotiations to enhance the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention have made steady progress. The Model Protocol Additional to Safeguards Agreements between State(s) has been concluded. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva is considering in a serious and in-depth manner a new negotiation agenda.

Nonetheless, peace has not prevailed in the world. The cold-war mentality still exists. Hegemonism and power politics continue to threaten world peace and stability. Attempts to interfere under various excuses in the internal affairs of other countries, expand military blocs and strengthen military alliances, as well as research on development and the deployment of missile defence systems which negatively affect strategic security and stability, and the proliferation of these systems to other countries and regions, are not conducive to the maintenance of international peace and security. They also run counter to the international trend towards peace, cooperation and development.

The Chinese delegation is of the view that with the further progress in international arms control and disarmament, and particularly with the conclusion and implementation of a number of international arms control and disarmament legal instruments, it is obviously highly necessary to strengthen the international non-proliferation efforts. We are pleased to note that the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the completion of negotiations on the Additional Protocol to Safeguards Agreements, the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the negotiations to enhance the effectiveness of the Biological Weapons Convention have enhanced and will further enhance international non-proliferation. It is easy to see that all the above non-proliferation regimes, established on the basis of relatively broad participation, while taking into account the needs of peaceful uses as much as possible, enjoy relatively solid mass support. They will therefore be relatively effective and have vitality.

At the same time, we cannot but recognize that during the cold-war period a small number of developed countries, with the purpose of deterring their opponents, set up a series of so-called non-proliferation mechanisms and arrangements. Although these mechanisms and arrangements may have played a certain role in non-proliferation, they are discriminatory and exclusive in nature and non-transparent in practice. As those international legal instruments are already in place, or are about to be put in place, maintaining or even enhancing these discriminatory and exclusive mechanisms and arrangements clashes with the relevant international legal instruments. What is even worse is that they will continue

to impede the social and economic development of all countries, the developing countries in particular.

What is most serious is that some countries, under the pretext of preventing proliferation, interfere in and block the legitimate and normal economic and technological exchanges of countries, particularly the developing countries. They have even adopted double standards. On the one hand, they exert pressure and even impose or threaten to impose sanctions against other countries under the name of non-proliferation. On the other hand, they themselves engage in massive sales of advanced weapons and equipment to sensitive regions, infringing upon the national sovereignty of other countries and damaging regional peace and stability.

The Chinese Government adheres to Mr. Deng Xiaoping's thinking on diplomatic endeavours and firmly pursues an independent foreign policy of peace. China determines its position and policy on international affairs on the merits of each case, by proceeding from the fundamental interests of the people of China and of the world as a whole. China will never yield to any outside pressure or enter into an alliance with any big Power or group of countries, nor will it establish any military bloc, participate in the arms race or seek military expansion. China is a staunch force safeguarding world peace and regional stability.

China has all along advocated genuine disarmament. It stood for the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, the prohibition of the development of outer space weapons, and the reduction of conventional weapons to a rational level.

At the fifteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, held last month, General Secretary Jiang Zemin announced that on the basis of the reduction of 1 million troops in the 1980s, China would further reduce its military forces by 500,000 troops within the next three years. This is another significant and concrete disarmament step taken by the Chinese Government unilaterally.

As a State Party to the NPT, China faithfully fulfils its obligation under the Treaty. As a nuclear-weapon State, China was the first to sign the CTBT, after the host country of the United Nations, and participated in an active and responsible manner in the preparatory work for the Treaty's entry into force. Since the first day of its possession of nuclear weapons, China has undertaken not to be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances, and China is the only nuclear-weapon State which has undertaken unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones. It has consistently supported the efforts to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones by agreements freely arrived at among the States concerned.

China ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention in April this year. To date, China has received two initial inspections by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

China has fully implemented its obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention, and is actively participating in the negotiations on enhancing the effectiveness of the Convention.

China actively supports the international non-proliferation efforts, resolutely opposes the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, and strictly abides by the provisions of the international treaties to which it is a State party.

China adheres to three principles on nuclear export: first, the export should be used exclusively for peaceful purposes; secondly, the export should be subject to the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); and thirdly, the export should not be transferred to a third country without China's consent. China does not provide assistance to nuclear facilities not subject to the IAEA safeguards. In September this year, the Chinese Government promulgated the regulations on nuclear export control and has applied for membership in the Zangger Committee.

China attaches importance to the control and management of the trade in sensitive chemicals. It has formulated a number of regulations and lists of chemicals in accordance with the relevant international conventions.

Everybody is talking about the issue of a total ban of anti-personnel landmines. Is this issue more important than the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons and outer space weapons? That remains an open question. However, I should like to take this opportunity to elaborate the views of the Chinese delegation on the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

China has taken a constructive and realistic attitude in the negotiation and conclusion of the amendment to the landmines Protocol and is considering ratifying the Protocol at an early date. In April last year, China undertook to

implement a moratorium on its export of anti-personnel landmines, which do not conform to the technical criteria contained in the amended Protocol before its entry into force. China has also done a lot of work in mine-clearance and has provided demining assistance to other developing countries.

The Chinese delegation holds that the anti-personnel landmine is a weapon of a purely defensive nature and that the humanitarian concerns surrounding it arise exclusively for two reasons: the shortcomings of old-type anti-personnel landmines and their indiscriminate use, and inadequate post-conflict demining efforts. The elimination of civilian casualties should be our sole objective. The fundamental way to achieve that objective should be to clear the old-type anti-personnel landmines sown in the past, rectify their shortcomings and ban the further use of that type of landmine.

China is in favour of imposing strict and feasible restrictions on anti-personnel landmines and their use, with a view to achieving the objective of an ultimate ban in a step-by-step manner. In order to meet its legitimate defence requirements, China cannot but reserve its legitimate right to use anti-personnel landmines on its own territories before alternative means are found and defensive capabilities established. China can only accept an international agreement on anti-personnel landmines that fully accommodates its aforementioned security concerns.

China has always pursued an independent foreign policy of peace. It has never engaged in overseas aggression, nor does it have any intention of using landmines in other countries. Should China use anti-personnel landmines in legitimate circumstances, it would be entirely for the purpose of defending against foreign military intervention and aggression, safeguarding its national unification and territorial integrity, and ensuring a peaceful life for its own people.

We have noted that some countries recently concluded a convention in Oslo on the total ban of anti-personnel landmines. China respects their sovereign choice and understands their humanitarian concerns. Meanwhile, China maintains that, in addressing the issue of anti-personnel landmines, both the humanitarian concerns and the legitimate security requirements of the countries concerned have to be taken into account. In the final analysis, security itself is an important aspect of humanitarian concerns.

On 26 June this year, the Chinese delegation to the Conference on Disarmament comprehensively elaborated the position of the Chinese Government on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. For the information of the Committee's members, and especially those that are not members of the Conference on Disarmament, we have made available a few copies of that statement on the table near the entrance of the room. However, I should like to point out that, since there have been certain new developments since 26 June, the Chinese delegation needs to consider further whether and how the Conference on Disarmament should address the issue of anti-personnel landmines. We are prepared to hear the views of other delegations on this matter.

I should now like to turn to the issue of international security. The two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century plunged mankind into unprecedented havoc. The cold war, which lasted for more than four decades in the latter half of this century, kept humanity under the dark shadow of the threat of war. With the advent of the twenty-first century, we now face an historic choice as to what kind of a world we should bring to the new century. The Chinese delegation holds that the international community should work to establish a just and rational new international political and economic order to ensure global and regional security. Such security should be based on necessary political and economic conditions and should have practical means to be achieved.

It is the view of the Chinese delegation that, as a political prerequisite for security, all countries should observe the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter as well as the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. Each country has the right to choose a development path according to its own national conditions. No country should interfere in the internal affairs of other countries on any grounds whatsoever, nor should any country or group of countries seek absolute security by compromising the security of others.

As the economic basis of security, all countries and regions should, on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, promote trade, economic and technological cooperation and scientific and cultural exchanges among themselves, with a view to narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor and achieving common prosperity and development.

As a practical way to achieve global and regional security and to maintain the world peace, all countries should strengthen consultation and cooperation in the field

of security, increase mutual understanding and trust, and seek to settle their differences and disputes by peaceful means.

International arms control and disarmament are closely related to security and should be mutually reinforcing. We therefore maintain that, first, international arms control and disarmament should reinforce the security of countries instead of weakening and undermining it. The focus of international arms control and disarmament should be on those issues with significant influence on international peace and security.

Secondly, the international community should continue to advance the process of multilateral arms control and disarmament. The existing international arms control and disarmament treaties should be further universalized and their faithful implementation and complete adherence by States parties ensured. Efforts should be made to create conditions conducive to the negotiation and conclusion of new treaties through the multilateral negotiating mechanisms with broad representation.

Thirdly, it is necessary to prevent a small number of countries taking advantage of their advanced military technology and economic power to seek their absolute security and military superiority over others while they focus the target of disarmament on the developing countries and deprive them of their legitimate right and means of self-defence.

Fourthly, the countries with the largest and most sophisticated conventional and nuclear arsenals should continue to bear special responsibility for disarmament.

Finally, the existing discriminatory and exclusive export control mechanisms and arrangements should be overhauled and rectified. A fair and rational international non-proliferation system should be established through negotiations, with the participation of all countries concerned. Parties to the relevant international legal instruments should utilize the procedures provided in these instruments, including dialogue and cooperation, to address any concern related to proliferation and to achieve the common objective of international non-proliferation. No country has the right to impose its own domestic laws on the international community, nor should it impose or threaten to impose sanctions at will.

China will continue to cooperate with all countries and make its due contribution to the further promotion of the international disarmament process to ensure the next century a peaceful and tranquil centenary.

Mr. Lukin (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): First, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your election to the responsible post of Chairman of the First Committee and wish you success in your lofty task. It goes without saying that you can rely on the cooperation of the Russian delegation in fulfilling the tasks before you.

The cold war is a thing of the past, and the post-confrontation world is gradually becoming multipolar. Thanks to our joint efforts, the process of disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, continues to develop, despite many difficulties and problems. These positive trends are clearly particularly important in terms of the fruitful work of the First Committee. On the other hand, because of the contradictions and transitional nature of the world today, the international community must continue to make persistent efforts in that direction, since if we hesitate on the road before us we may land back where we started.

Russia's main priority is still the establishment of a multipolar world free from blocs. One of the most significant success stories, if we look beyond Europe, has been the signing of the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Russian Federation in Paris in May. This was made possible by the fact that the leaders of the major countries of Europe and North America, in the current difficult situation, have shown the political will to accommodate mutual interests and find compromise solutions designed to keep the world from returning to confrontation.

We continue consistently to oppose the expansion of the North Atlantic Alliance as an outdated and, hence, counter-productive policy direction. However, we are combining this strong position with strenuous efforts effectively to turn the hidebound structures of the bloc system into an integral part of a pan-European and universal security system. It is particularly important today to prevent new divisions from emerging in Europe. We are ready to go down our part of the road. As the Committee knows, in May the President of Russia came up with an initiative whereby Russian nuclear systems would no longer be targeted at NATO countries. We have kept our promise.

Two major accomplishments in recent years have paved the way for a major breakthrough in the field of multilateral arms control and disarmament — the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear

Weapons (NPT) in 1995; and the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The latter has already been signed by more than 140 States. We are convinced that this instrument, which frees humankind from the threat of any nuclear explosion, will effectively contribute to strengthening the non-proliferation regime and will be an effective obstacle to qualitative improvements in nuclear arsenals.

It is extremely important now to make this agreement truly universal. We hope that all countries, including those with the capability to develop nuclear weapons and whose signature is of major importance for the entry into force of this historic agreement, will sign the Treaty.

Russia welcomes the results of this year's first session of the Preparatory Committee of the NPT Review Conference. We attach paramount importance to a comprehensive and objective review of the Treaty that is one of the cornerstones of the global security system and the development of international cooperation. We particularly appreciate the fact that the Preparatory Committee began discussing substantive issues right at the outset and even reached a consensus agreement on a number of important elements that can form the basis for its recommendations on those issues. We support the continuation of this work.

We have repeatedly expressed our willingness to work consistently with other nuclear-weapon States to encourage all members of the "nuclear club" to reduce their nuclear arsenals and ultimately to eliminate them.

I would like once again to recall the proposals of the Russian President to ensure that nuclear arsenals are stationed only on the territory of nuclear-weapon Powers. Russia, for its part, has resolved this problem. In cooperation with Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, the nuclear weapons that remained on their territory after the demise of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics have been withdrawn to the Russian Federation with a view to eliminating them.

We feel that the Conference on Disarmament should begin negotiations on a multilateral convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It is high time for such a convention in the field of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. As early as 1993 the General Assembly reached consensus on drafting and concluding such a convention. The Conference on Disarmament has adopted a mandate for the respective negotiations and established a special negotiating body. We are convinced that it is time to activate this mechanism.

As is well-known, Russia has already stopped producing weapons-grade uranium. A national programme to stop the production of weapons-grade plutonium will be implemented by 1998.

A new initiative put forward by President Boris Yeltsin in his address to delegates at the anniversary session of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference is yet further proof that we are as good as our word. The decision gradually to remove up to 500 tons of highly enriched uranium and up to 50 tons of weapons-grade plutonium from nuclear military programmes is an effective contribution by Russia to ensuring that nuclear disarmament is irreversible.

The 1972 Treaty on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems (ABM) is of paramount importance to nuclear disarmament as a key element of strategic stability and a prerequisite for further reductions in strategic offensive arms. In this regard, I would like to note with satisfaction the substantial progress made in resolving the issue of strengthening this Treaty, namely, the recent signing in New York of the package of agreements on demarcation between strategic and non-strategic ABM systems. The agreements, which were jointly drawn up by Russia, the United States, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine, reaffirm our States' commitment to the ABM Treaty, and their determination to prevent it from being circumvented and preserve the positive impact the Treaty has on strategic stability and security. These agreements offer new opportunities for Russia and the United States to work together to attain the goal set by the Presidents of the two countries in Helsinki — to reduce the two countries' nuclear weapons to 80 per cent below the cold-war level.

Furthermore, in accordance with the Russian-American agreement, the work of experts on the START III Treaty will be continued, while full-scale START III negotiations, as was decided at the Helsinki Summit, will commence immediately after the START II Treaty enters into force. We expect this work to produce early and tangible results. The Russian Parliament closely links the ratification of the START II Treaty with specific and visible progress towards the conclusion of the START III Treaty.

We are convinced that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world contributes significantly to the

enhancement of stability and security, and also promotes the narrowing of the sphere of nuclear preparations.

We support, in particular, the ideas of our Belorussian and Ukrainian friends concerning the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe.

Russia's position remains unchanged concerning the requirement that the rules of international law be strictly observed in negotiating nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties.

Russia advocates that mankind be fully liberated from the threat of chemical weapons. We welcome the entry into force last April of the Convention on the prohibition and destruction of these barbaric weapons of mass destruction. The Convention has been submitted to the State Duma for ratification. The Duma is now actively engaged in work aimed at the ratification of this important international agreement. In its appeal [A/52/137, annex II] to the Conference of States Parties to the Convention, the Duma stated its intention to complete the ratification process, possibly this autumn. I hope this will be done in the nearest future. Although the Duma is still debating this issue, I can assure the Committee that Russia will not stay outside the international community's efforts to get rid of chemical weapons.

Russia continues to support proposals aimed at the strengthening of the regime of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) through the establishment of its verification mechanism. We would like the negotiations on this issue to result in the creation of a system to verify compliance with the Convention that would be reliable, not burdensome, and based on objective criteria. It is important that as a result of this work the Convention be strengthened, but not revised.

Russians share and understand the sufferings of people in many parts of the world who become victims of dangerous landmines. Over a hundred thousand explosive devices are detected and destroyed annually in the territory of Russia, and the direct costs of these operations exceed $25 million dollars per year.

Speaking in Strasbourg at the end of last week, Russia's President reaffirmed our positive attitude, in principle, to signing a convention banning anti-personnel landmines, once the necessary conditions have been created. This will undoubtedly happen in coordination with other interested countries and with due regard for all objective circumstances.

The Russian Federation is in favour of making gradual progress towards this goal, which should include a number of agreed time stages, while viable alternatives to this type of defensive weapon are developed. As we see it, the main tasks at this stage are to bring into force the new Protocol II on mines to the 1980 Convention on inhumane weapons, ensure the broadest possible participation in it of members of the world community and see that there is strict observance of the norms and standards it provides. This document is based on a careful balance of the interests of States, taking into account their actual capabilities, security interests and self-defence needs.

We clearly understand and in many respects share the humanitarian focus of the efforts to prohibit anti-personnel landmines. However, a hasty prohibition of landmines not accompanied by measures to strengthen stability, could have a negative impact, including on anti-terrorist activities. The proper forum for the discussion of the subject of landmines is the Conference on Disarmament, where it is possible to carry out an in-depth study and discussion of the entire set of respective problems, including from the standpoint of their impact on the strengthening the security of interested States and international security in general. This, as experience has shown, is a difficult task to accomplish on the "fast track" of a short-term diplomatic process.

We in Russia positively assess the results of the work on the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). We are pleased to note that it has become possible to a great extent to implement the Russian-American agreements in this respect reached in Helsinki and Denver. The adopted document defines the areas of accord and sets the major directions for further work. What is important is that it draws the basic contours of the future conventional armaments verification regime in Europe in a new geopolitical environment. Now we have to maintain and increase the momentum of the negotiations in Vienna and get on with them without wasting time.

We are pursuing a consistent policy of enhancing transparency in armaments. Since 1993 we have been submitting our data on a regular basis to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. We consider that ensuring the widest possible participation of United Nations Member States in the operation of this important instrument is one of the major tasks of the day.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words about the mechanism for discussing disarmament issues in the United Nations and conducting multilateral negotiations in

this field. I think many members would agree that this year we are faced with a certain deviation in the multilateral negotiating process. The problem is not only the Conference on Disarmament, which, due to a whole number of linkages insisted upon by various countries, failed to commence negotiations on the prohibition of the production of fissile materials and landmines this year.

What is even more disappointing is that there are those who attempt to make use of these difficulties to undermine the role of the Conference as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, and to take a "fast track" of special forums, which, as experience has shown, is not capable of taking into account the security interests of all countries. We are against such a cutting of corners. We are convinced that only patient work within the Conference on Disarmament can lead to such achievements as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on the prohibition of biological and toxin weapons, the Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the many other important international agreements elaborated in this forum. We think it important that the General Assembly reaffirm the role of the Conference on Disarmament this year. I think that the United Nations Secretariat should also organize its work in such a way as to give this forum the attention it deserves.

In conclusion, I would like to state that the new democratic Russia remains committed to the great cause of disarmament, and is willing to work hard to unravel the most intricate knots with a view to liberating mankind from excessive weapons threatening the very existence of our planet.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): I would like to express my satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, a distinguished representative of Botswana, as Chairman of the First Committee. It has often been a pleasure working together with Botswana in multilateral forums, not only because chance has made us alphabetical neighbours, but also because Botswana has, like Brazil, been a country whose actions are directed to furthering the cause of peace and international security.

I also want to pay tribute to Ambassador Sychou of Belarus for the effective way in which he led the Committee at the fifty-first session.

During the current year we have witnessed some progress in the area of disarmament. Perhaps the most important development was the Oslo Diplomatic Conference, which adopted the text of a Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines. Brazil is committed to the Ottawa process and intends to sign the anti-personnel landmine Convention in December.

It is important to note the close cooperation between Latin American countries during the Ottawa process, yet another sign that our region enjoys conditions favourable to harmony and peace.

As Brazil's Minister of External Relations, Ambassador Luiz Felipe Lampreia, affirmed in his statement to the General Assembly, the agenda of the Latin American and Caribbean countries is focused on the process of regional integration and on the development of ever-closer links between our societies. Defence procurement in our region aims basically at the replacement of obsolete equipment. Frequently, even effective participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations requires some increase in military-related spending, such as is the case, for instance, with logistic equipment in support of lengthy deployment overseas.

What we witness in our region is an increase in military cooperation between neighbouring countries. Today, as we speak, units of the armies of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, and observers from Paraguay, are undertaking the second Southern Cross Operation, a simulation of a field peacekeeping operation, that will be inspected on 16 October by the Presidents of Brazil and Uruguay. This operation is evidence of the increased confidence that the process of integration has brought to our region.

Latin American military expenditures are the lowest in the world in per capita terms. On other continents however, where the average spending is already much higher, some countries that are members of military alliances are being urged to upgrade their inventory, modernize their armed forces, make their equipment compatible with that of their allies, and, in brief, to rearm and spend more. This is a regrettable tendency that we feel should be discouraged.

Despite the progress we have witnessed, we should not remain silent with regard to a worrisome situation, namely, the unlimited development of non-conventional, non-nuclear, new forms of armament that threaten the international community's reiterated disarmament goals. We believe that some caution should be exercised. Self-restraint is necessary in order to avoid a new arms race in sophisticated weaponry between the great military Powers.

In this pursuit of limiting the development of new weapons, it is also essential to strengthen the prohibition regimes established by the Conventions on biological and chemical weapons. We are confident that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, under the able direction of the Brazilian Director-General, Ambassador Jose Mauricio Bustani, will continue to make strides towards the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. In this regard, we welcome the assurance by President Boris Yeltsin that the Russian Federation remains committed to the ratification of the Convention as soon as possible.

Since we met last year Brazil has undertaken a number of initiatives relevant to the First Committee's deliberations. On 7 November 1996 the Brazilian Government presented to the nation a new national defence policy. I would like to emphasize some of its principles and goals. The new national defence policy is intended, *inter alia*,

> "to contribute actively to the establishment of an international order based on the rule of law that will provide regional and universal peace and the sustainable development of mankind;
>
> "to promote Brazil's stance in favour of global disarmament, conditioned on the destruction of nuclear arsenals and other weapons of mass destruction, in a multilaterally negotiated process;
>
> "to take part in international peacekeeping operations;
>
> "to work towards the maintenance of a peaceful and cooperative environment along national borders and to contribute to solidarity in Latin America and the South Atlantic".

A most significant decision in connection with disarmament and non-proliferation was taken on 20 June of this year by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, when the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was submitted to the Brazilian Congress for approval.

The Brazilian position on nuclear disarmament is well known. The option of acquiring nuclear weapons was renounced long ago. Brazil actively participated in the negotiation of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Later, the Congress decided to include in the Constitution of 1988 additional prohibition clauses regarding such weapons. Indeed, Brazil is one of the few countries in the world that has such a prohibition inscribed in its Constitution.

The same renunciation has been reaffirmed in other legally binding international instruments, namely, the bilateral agreement on nuclear cooperation with Argentina, the Quadripartite Safeguards Agreement, to which the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is a party, and, recently, the entry into force of the amendments to the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

In acceding to the NPT, Brazil intends to contribute further to the cause of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. As President Cardoso stated in his message to the Brazilian Congress, Brazil knows:

> "the NPT by itself does not represent a definitive solution to the problem of nuclear weapons."

The Treaty was conceived in the 1960s as a temporary solution to the problem of nuclear proliferation, which could have led to increasing numbers of nuclear-armed countries and multiplication of the risks of nuclear confrontation. Along with many other countries, Brazil stressed then that the nuclear-arms race was not compatible with article VI of that Treaty.

Developments in the past decade, since the 1987 Treaty on intermediate-range nuclear forces between the United States and the Soviet Union, have both reflected and accelerated change in this scenario. Nuclear weapons, once considered a cornerstone of security for military alliances, are increasingly seen as a source of unnecessary risk and expense. Enlightened public opinion in the nuclear-weapon States is coming to consider them an embarrassment.

International public opinion increasingly realizes, first, that nuclear weapons have no military utility other than — perhaps — to deter other nuclear weapons, and, secondly, that a world in which nuclear arsenals are sharply reduced and eventually eliminated will be safer for all.

From its position of authority in the international system, the International Court of Justice has delivered a clear Advisory Opinion denying legal legitimacy to atomic weaponry. Further, the Court concluded that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, under strict and effective international control.

In the more practical realm of national defence needs, the campaign led in this country by Generals Lee Butler and Andrew Goodpaster has done as much against claims of military utility. Their positions support the conclusions reached two years ago by the Canberra Commission, to which I had the honour to belong. After examining the question of the possible usefulness of nuclear weapons, the Commission reached the unanimous conclusion that nuclear weapons diminished the security of all States, including States that possess them. The sole way out of the present and unacceptable situation is to take progressive steps that will lead to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

In spite of the solemn commitments accepted under the NPT, some still argue that the prohibition of nuclear weapons is unfeasible. This should not be so, and indeed it is not so. A recent report of the United States National Academy of Sciences notes that what is unthinkable is the possibility that the current unstable situation can be left unattended without major risks to our own and future generations.

The draft resolution that Brazil and a group of like-minded countries intend to submit this year on a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere, focusing on the promotion of cooperation between the four nuclear-free zones for the shared goals of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, is a step in that direction. We expect to consult with all interested delegations in the coming weeks with a view to achieving broad support for that draft.

One of the major challenges of our time is to effectively eliminate nuclear weapons. We see the NPT, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the four nuclear-weapon-free zone Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba and the recognition of a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere as steps towards the goal of freeing mankind from the nightmare of nuclear destruction.

A world free from nuclear weapons: that is the stand that Brazil will continue to defend here in the First Committee, at the Conference on Disarmament and, hopefully soon, in the Review Conference of the NPT to be held in the year 2000.

Mr. Bune (Fiji): The Fiji delegation is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over this Committee, and we would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. We wish to assure you of our full cooperation during your tenure of office.

The international community has witnessed significant progress in the area of disarmament and international security. We have moved from the pinnacle of a world holocaust to laying the foundations for disarmament and secure and lasting peace in our world. Significant advances have been made in the establishment and consolidation of international legal instruments and the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We have seen the signing of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We have witnessed the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We have seen the establishment of the African nuclear-weapon-free zone and efforts to establish a zone in South-East Asia, which will add to similar zones in other parts of the world. The Chemical Weapons Convention has come into force, and efforts are being made to strengthen the prohibition against biological weapons. There has been recent progress in the effort to reduce and eliminate landmines.

We have indeed made significant progress towards disarmament, but we still have a long way to go to achieve our goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world, prohibition of the production of weapons of mass destruction, and general disarmament.

The international community last year hailed the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. My country, Fiji, was among the first to sign the Treaty and was also the first to ratify it. In the interest of lasting peace and security on our planet and in the interest of all mankind, we would urge all States which have not done so yet to sign and ratify the Treaty. The Treaty will be meaningless, however, unless we pursue the rapid and positive implementation of its provisions. We therefore deplore the recent announcement by one nuclear-weapon State that it will conduct a series of "sub-critical" underground nuclear tests, which, in our view, represent a blatant disregard of the expressed concerns of the international community.

In the final analysis, the CTBT, the NPT and the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones are only steps forward. We must aim at, we must work towards and we must have the political will to agree to, the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The Fiji delegation calls on all nuclear-weapon States to end the production of nuclear weapons, to end the stockpiling of nuclear weapons, and to destroy current stockpiles of nuclear weapons. We also call on the international community to begin negotiations as soon as

possible on a treaty for the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free world.

It is to be regretted that the current momentum in the disarmament process has been severely hampered this year because of basic disagreements in Geneva over the work programme of the Conference on Disarmament. We urge all parties, especially the nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States, to do their utmost to quickly reach agreement on the work programme, as the continuing impasse will expose this single multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament to further risks of its being stepped over, as proved by the recent agreements reached on the CTBT and anti-personnel landmines.

The Chemical Weapons Convention has now come into force, and the international community should work towards ensuring its full implementation. We call on all States that produce or have the capability to produce chemical weapons to sign and ratify the Convention.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction remains an academic document. The Fiji delegation urges the international community to move with greater speed to conclude a verification protocol.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, negotiated at the Diplomatic Conference in Oslo last month, is a significant advance in the collaborative efforts of the international community and civil society in the area of disarmament. The Convention is a recognition that anti-personnel landmines are an abhorrence in our civilization today and must be totally prohibited. Now that a Convention has been produced, we must act to sign and ratify it in order to give it and its provisions validity. Fiji looks forward to signing the Convention in Ottawa on 3 December 1997. We call on major Powers, in particular the United States and China, to demonstrate their global leadership role by joining the rest of the international community in signing the treaty.

The international community must now cooperate and collaborate with great speed to remove the millions of landmines that are planted in many parts of our world.

The production and transfer of fissile materials for the manufacture of nuclear weapons pose a threat to our efforts for nuclear-weapons disarmament. The Fiji delegation calls for the establishment of a fissile-material inventory and for the negotiation and conclusion of a fissile-material cut-off treaty.

As far as conventional weapons are concerned, Fiji calls for the implementation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

While the world may have progressed from the brink of a possible Third World War during the cold-war era, the increasing number of intra-State conflicts now constitute the most pressing threat to international peace and security. These intra-State conflicts not only give rise to large-scale displacement of persons and genocide, but also cause massive transboundary refugee flows which impact severely on the social and economic relations within receiving countries throughout the North and South. We therefore welcome and support current efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts, especially in the Balkans and in Central Africa.

The inability of international organizations to respond quickly to conflict situations clearly indicates that the international community is ill-prepared to deal with intra-State conflicts and is generally inclined to manage conflicts rather than to prevent them. The Fiji delegation therefore renews its call for the establishment of a permanent mechanism or unit of preventive diplomacy that can respond promptly, positively and peacefully to potential conflicts and threats of genocide. Such a unit or mechanism should have the capacity to receive, collate, analyse and interpret intelligence information and reports, with a view to early detection of potential conflicts, and early reaction to minimize, contain and resolve such conflicts, in collaboration with relevant Member States.

Fiji warmly welcomes and supports the proposal by the Secretary-General, contained in his report on the reform of the United Nations, to set up a new United Nations Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation in New York. For a small island developing State like Fiji, given the concomitant budget constraints, strengthening the coordinating role here in New York would have cost benefits and be most useful in a number of other ways. But, most important, we believe that the decision to reconstitute the Centre for Disarmament Affairs into a revitalized Department of Disarmament and Arms Regulation at United Nations Headquarters is long overdue and reflects the determination of the majority of Member States to place the issue of disarmament at the centre of United Nations concerns.

We also welcome and support the proposal to review the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission and this Committee with a view to updating, rationalizing and streamlining their work.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize that it behoves us all, individually and collectively, to move from a culture of conflict to a culture of peace and international security, for the benefit of all mankind.

Mr. García (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation wishes to begin by conveying to you, Sir, its warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. We feel certain that under your able leadership our deliberations will be successful. You may count on our full cooperation in contributing to the achievement of this goal.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to Ambassador Alyaksandr Sychou for his able leadership of the Committee during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

At the outset, my delegation wishes to express its full support for the agreements reached on disarmament issues by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs and heads of delegation of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries at their meeting held on 25 September 1997.

The most significant events of the past year on matters within the purview of the First Committee include the following: first, the entry into force last April of the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which more than 100 States are parties; secondly, the holding of the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); thirdly, the fact that, following the first anniversary of its opening for signature, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) now has more than 148 signatory States; and fourthly, the encouraging progress made with respect to the negotiations on and the adoption of the text of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

We must acknowledge certain troublesome facts, however, *inter alia*, the state of virtual paralysis of the Conference on Disarmament. Nor have we to date noted any significant steps in the direction indicated by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion on the "Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons", with respect to the obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control, in accordance with article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. If no substantive progress is made in this regard, the credibility of the NPT will be weakened, along with its potential for universality.

My delegation supports the establishment within the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee to begin negotiations on a phased programme for nuclear disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time-frame. Likewise, we reiterate our support for the proposed programme of action for nuclear disarmament in accordance with the criteria set forth by the Group of 21 within the framework of the Conference on Disarmament.

We note also the emergence of important initiatives similar to those that resulted in the establishment, by the Antarctic Treaty and the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok, of nuclear-weapon-free zones. These include initiatives put forward by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia, and another by Mongolia for the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that country.

My country supports the initiatives aimed at freeing the southern hemisphere of nuclear weapons. It supports also the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

Of concern is the fact that last year, for the first time in recent years, arms sales increased. The arms race consumes many of the resources that could otherwise be devoted to the economic and social development of the developing countries.

My delegation considers the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms to be of major importance and wishes to highlight its recommendations aimed at preventing the excessive accumulation and the transfer of small arms and light weapons in certain regions of the world.

The Panel stressed the need for all States to implement the recommendations contained in the guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991, adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1996. It also

emphasized that all States and the relevant regional and international organizations should intensify their cooperation efforts to combat all aspects of illicit trafficking, and that the United Nations should encourage the adoption and implementation of regional and subregional moratoriums, where appropriate, on the transfer and manufacture of small arms and light weapons. Finally, the Panel recommended that the United Nations consider the possibility of convening an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, in order to tackle the issues identified in the report that was submitted.

My delegation notes with particular interest the proposals put forward during the Bamako conference, held in November 1996, on a moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of light weapons. We also noted with interest the ministerial-level consultations that resulted in the adoption of a document on the declaration of a moratorium, including the establishment of a mechanism known as the programme for coordination and assistance on disarmament and security. These initiatives could be taken into consideration in other regions of the world, particularly in areas of conflict, and the moratoriums extended to other weapons, including high-technology ones. That was precisely the framework in which the President of Colombia, Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, formulated the idea on that issue that he presented to the General Assembly on 25 September last.

We take note of the report on the operation and further development of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and of the work of the Group of Governmental Experts in this area. We believe that the Arms Register would better achieve its goal as a confidence-building measure if its scope were extended to other weapons, including light weapons. Furthermore, it should not be limited to information on imports and exports but should incorporate data on manufacturing and on existing stockpiles.

We fully agree with the Secretary-General's view that for the Register to fulfil its potential it is important not only to increase participation in it but also to expand its scope. In this regard, we regret that after considering all proposed new categories and types of weapons to be added to the Register the Group of Experts could not reach agreement on those proposals.

My delegation wishes to reiterate its support for the convening of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We are convinced that such a session would be the appropriate forum to study future action on issues of disarmament and arms control and other international-security issues. We are also convinced of the importance of multilateralism in the process of disarmament and of the need to guarantee full participation by all members of the international community in the preparation of a fourth special session and in the session itself. We note with interest the progress in the Disarmament Commission towards achieving agreement on the objectives and agenda of a fourth special session. We have noted an evolution in the positions on this issue, which encourages us to persevere in our active and constructive participation in the search for consensus.

Finally, my delegation wishes to welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a Department for Disarmament and Arms Regulation. We are certain that administrative reforms should allow the Secretariat to respond effectively to the disarmament priorities of Member States, as set out in the relevant resolutions and mandates of the General Assembly.

Since these are relevant issues on our agenda, we are willing to continue this open and constructive dialogue on the work of the First Committee and the Disarmament Commission with a view to enabling those bodies to play their proper role in the work of the Organization.

The Chairman: I call on the observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Hofer (Switzerland) (*interpretation from French*): I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the fifty-second session, and to assure you of the full support of the Swiss delegation. Your assumption of the chairmanship as the representative of an African country comes at an auspicious time, for the countries of your continent have played an important, indeed decisive, role on the issue of conventional weapons, specifically in the fight against anti-personnel landmines. We are thus gratified to be able to cooperate with you here.

As we assess developments in the sphere of disarmament since the fifty-first session and as we seek to decide on the strategy to adopt for the coming year, we cannot but note that we are now in a period of transition where ample progress is being achieved in many areas of international security. On the other hand, this progress is too often a mere stage in, or a beginning of, a negotiating process, because of fresh information or because of new requirements on the part of the international community — which is however unable to reach the goals it has set itself.

On the basis of that observation, I wish to address three topics in my statement today: institutional questions, weapons of mass destruction, and conventional weapons, including anti-personnel landmines.

Turning first to institutional matters, let me take note of the sections on disarmament in the report of the Secretary-General on the reform of the United Nations, contained in document A/51/950. As the Swiss Government affirmed during the Secretary-General's recent visit to Bern, my country fully supports the priorities and proposals set out in that report. Moreover, regarding the division of labour between New York and Geneva, Switzerland has expressed its desire that the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament should be given the necessary flexibility on the allocation and level of available resources to meet the needs of ongoing negotiations, including those relating to disarmament but taking place outside the Conference on Disarmament. The Swiss authorities have reaffirmed their readiness to host follow-up conferences and meetings stemming from disarmament instruments entrusted, in one way or another, to the United Nations.

Still in the institutional context, we note with regret that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to begin substantive negotiations at its last session. As a new member of the Conference, we have the greatest respect for the impressive achievements of that body, which is responsible for all the essential universal instruments in the sphere of disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament should thus take care lest its historic baggage become too unwieldy and prevent it from finding rapid and effective responses to future challenges.

In our view, then, the Conference on Disarmament must end the phase of reorientation and deliberation and return to the path of genuine negotiations based on common political will. If it does not do so, it will quite simply run the risk of being sidestepped by the international community, which would then look for other ways to reach its objectives in the area of international security. Switzerland wants therefore to urge the Conference on Disarmament early next year to take on a new identity — whose features have already been partially mapped out by the four coordinators appointed at the last session of the Conference.

The paralysis in the Conference on Disarmament leads me to my next subject: weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, widely diverging views on which continue to weigh on the work of the Conference. The policy of Switzerland on this matter is well known. We do not believe that nuclear disarmament is an end in itself, but rather a means to consolidate international security. That objective remains to be achieved, through the gradual, parallel establishment of stable balance at a constantly diminishing level of armaments, while aiming for the complete, universal dismantling of nuclear weapons.

This approach gives rise, in our view, to a number of conclusions on the various negotiations under way. First of all, we see as legitimate the efforts to open the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament to the question of nuclear disarmament. Those efforts seem to be based on two major concerns, which we also share: the existence of a wish, despite the major quantitative reductions of recent years, for the retention of a mass-destruction capability that no longer reflects the present state of cooperation in the security sphere; and fear at the continued situation of inequality among members of the international community.

On the other hand, we are not convinced that a multilateral framework is the most suitable for taking effective decisions on the pace and substance of a reduction of existing nuclear arsenals. Rather, it is necessary to ratify and implement START II as soon as possible so as to open up the way for later negotiations on further important reductions.

Finally, we are of the view that the Conference on Disarmament should devise a mechanism to enable its members to be kept up to date on new developments in the area of nuclear disarmament, and at the same time, to be a solid basis for launching negotiations in a related area — halting the production of fissile materials for military purposes, known as the "cut-off".

It is in this spirit that Switzerland is taking part in other activities in the nuclear sector, such as those of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference in 2000 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), whose second session will take place in Geneva in April next year. We are continuing, furthermore, our active involvement in the context of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), for whose Organization the Provisional Technical Secretariat was established last spring in Vienna. Also in the nuclear sphere, my Government supports the efforts to extend the network of nuclear-weapon-free zones. We welcome in particular the prospect of the establishment of such a zone in Central Asia.

While little progress has been seen — at least in the nuclear context — we can note with pleasure that in another area important developments have taken place. Here I refer

to negotiations in the Ad Hoc Group, under the highly regarded leadership of Ambassador Tibor Toth of Hungary, to strengthen the Convention on the prohibition of biological weapons, especially through a protocol establishing a verification institution. The Fourth Review Conference for this Convention, held in Geneva at the end of 1996, gave a new political impetus to that Group, which now has a text which has evolved far enough — we hope — to be adopted during 1999. Switzerland, for its part, supports the efforts to intensify negotiations with a view to conforming to this timetable.

Another encouraging development in the past year has been the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Switzerland is an active participant and is in charge of training some of the first inspectors for the new organization in The Hague. While it is gradually getting its work started, we still await ratification of that Convention by, in particular, the Russian Federation, which still has a substantial stock of chemical weapons. Switzerland appeals to all States which have not yet done so to ratify the Convention.

We do not forget that in spite of the harmful potential of weapons of mass destruction, which are a great threat, the majority of human tragedies result from the use of conventional weapons, the third and last subject of my statement. I begin with anti-personnel landmines.

The Oslo Conference to bring about a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines concluded on 18 September with the adoption of a convention prohibiting the production, use, stockpiling and transfer of those weapons. The credit for this result, which marks an important advance in international humanitarian law, goes in large part to the President of the Oslo Conference, Ambassador Selebi of South Africa; the Foreign Minister of Norway, organizer of the Conference; and the delegation of Austria, which, with the assistance of some other countries, prepared a draft convention serving as a basis for the Oslo talks.

The next stage in the process, set in motion in a remarkable manner by Canada, will be the signing of the agreed text in Oslo at the beginning of December in Ottawa. It is imperative that this text enjoy the adherence of the largest possible number of States, for in the long term only a universal ban will enable humankind to free itself finally from the scourge of anti-personnel landmines. Until this universality is achieved, it is desirable that States ratify Amended Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. It is true that this instrument leaves much to be desired, but until we have general implementation of the Convention negotiated in Oslo Amended Protocol II can mitigate the suffering caused by anti-personnel landmines.

In the final analysis, the long-term success of the text of the Convention, which will be opened for signature at the beginning of December, will depend on two elements: the removal and destruction of existing anti-personnel landmines, especially those which have been deployed by the millions throughout the world, often in the framework of internal conflicts, without their precise location being known; and the universality of a total ban on anti-personnel landmines — that is, the broadest possible ratification of the new Convention. I would like in this regard to highlight the encouraging statement made by the President of the Russian Federation last week in Strasbourg.

In realizing the objective of universality, the assistance of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and other United Nations bodies could be useful, as could efforts of individual States which took part in the Ottawa process. Switzerland commits itself to continue tirelessly its work for a world free of anti-personnel landmines. This commitment will take, among other things, the form of increased action in mine clearance and the rehabilitation of victims.

The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects — the legal instrument which I have just mentioned in the context of anti-personnel landmines — covers, with its additional Protocols, the use of specific weapons in armed conflicts. It was conceived in the form of a treaty framework which could be regularly updated in the light of the latest technological developments.

In the preparatory meetings for the Convention's Review Conference a Swiss proposal was discussed at meetings of experts on limiting the undesirable effect of projectiles. The priority given to regulating laser weapons and amending the Protocol on mines did not allow us to turn our attention to the ballistic issue. The final declaration of the Review Conference on 3 May 1996 did, however, encourage participating States to consider the elaboration of a new protocol. In this context, last week, from 7 to 8 October, Switzerland organized an international seminar on the traumatic effects of ballistic weapons. Almost 100 delegates took part, from more than 50 States and various non-governmental organizations. The main goal of that workshop was to make an objective appraisal, with the presence of international experts, of the problem of the use

of small-calibre weapons and ammunition that cause excessive suffering.

For more than 100 years there have been restrictions on the use of projectiles — explosive bullets and dumdum bullets — for humanitarian reasons. The workshop heightened the awareness of participants of the reason for weighing the military need for these weapons against humanitarian considerations, and to update the restrictions because of the excessive suffering that the weapons cause.

Switzerland will prepare a detailed document on this seminar and will ensure that it is distributed in the appropriate forums.

In conclusion, I should like to recall that Switzerland is prepared to cooperate closely with the United Nations for increased international security, with a lower and more balanced level of armaments, so as to reduce suffering.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.